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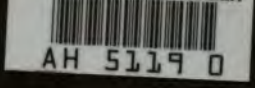
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Theological School,

CAMBRIDGE,

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THE

WAY TO CHRIST,

AND

THE WALK IN CHRIST.

BY

REV. G. W. ANDERSON, A. M.

Philadelphia:
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
118 ARCH STREET.
1851.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1851, by the
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

PHILADELPHIA:
STEREOTYPED BY GEORGE CHARLES,
PRINTED BY KING & BAIRD.

PREFACE.

THE preparation of the following work was first suggested to me in the year 1846. In the early part of that year, it was my happiness to be placed in the midst of a revival of religion of no ordinary interest. Both during the revival and afterwards, I was frequently called upon to converse with those that were asking The Way to Christ. I then felt, as often before, the need of a manual for inquirers, different in some important respects from those that I had been accustomed to use. Some of these possessed great and acknowledged merits; but none met, precisely, the want. The preparation of the following work was therefore undertaken. The general plan was marked out, and a considerable portion of it completed, when a press of public duties compelled me to lay it aside. It is only recently that I have found leisure to resume and finish the work. My object has been to present a

plain and Scriptural outline of personal religious duty. I have labored, therefore, to divest the subject of the difficulties with which it is sometimes surrounded; and to prepare a manual for inquirers at once brief and comprehensive. It is now sent forth with the hope that, under the divine blessing, it may prove an assistant to the Pastor in his momentous labors, and to the private Christian in his efforts to do good.

G. W. A.

Lewisburg, Pa., July, 1851.

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THE WAY TO CHRIST,

AND

THE WALK IN CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

ANXIETY FOR THE SOUL.

"What must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30.

An important point has been reached, when the question of the jailer at Philippi arises in the heart, even though it may never have been uttered by the lips. Some may perchance read these pages, who never have asked this momentous question. Anxiety for the soul is too often regarded as an unworthy feeling. Very many would blush to be suspected of such a weakness, as they call it. It may be that my reader has been one of this class. If you have ever cherished such a feeling, let me try to show you its utter unreasonableness. It

can be clearly shown, that there is no subject in which you ought to feel a deeper concern than in that of your eternal welfare. A concern for your eternal welfare is what I mean by anxiety for the soul. Your soul is that which can alone be properly called yourself. It is that internal something which fears and hopes, which hates and loves, which thinks and wills. It is that which raises you above the beast, and makes you man. Does it need argument to prove that you ought to be more anxious for its welfare than for the welfare of your body? Yet you are never ashamed of the anxiety you feel when you are attacked by disease. You ask at once for advice from your physician, and follow it until your health is restored. Yet with all your care you cannot render your body immortal. It must die, worn out by old age, if not destroyed more quickly by disease that no skill can cure, or by violence coming upon you unawares.

But your soul is immortal. It may drop the body; yet you yourself will still exist. You will think, and feel, and will; you will enjoy and suffer for ever. Now lay down this book for a few moments and think of eternal

existence; of your own immortality. Is it not a reasonable thing to ask whether that soul, which is destined to such an unending career, is to be forever happy or wretched? Is it not utterly unreasonable to feel no anxiety on a subject which relates to such momentous interests? If you allow yourself to think for one half hour, you will be compelled to confess to yourself that anxiety for the soul is a reasonable anxiety.

There are very few who do not, at some period, feel this anxiety. You have not always been free from concern for the future. Your spirit has very large capacities for enjoyment and suffering, and very large desires. You have found that all you possessed, or could hope to possess of the things of this world, could not satisfy it. It has still asked for something higher and more enduring. There are very many things around us adapted to awaken thoughts of a future world, and desires for something better than we at present possess. Serious thoughts may spring up when least we expect them. You have found it so. Did you never look up to the heavens when the stars were shining brightly in the

evening sky, and think how little after all is the world on which you dwell? Did you never listen to an old man recounting the history of his early years, and think how short at longest is our mortal life? Did you never see a friend, or a relative die, and, as the last words faltered on his lips, as the breath grew fainter and fainter, until all, at last, was hushed in awful silence,—feel that it is a very solemn thing to die? Did you never in the hours of sickness, or in the pauses that will occur in even the most busy life, find thoughts of God, of Death, of Eternity, come crowding into your mind?

You know that these or some other causes have led you at times to think serious thoughts. You have wished to be assured, that when your life was spent, when the call to leave this world came, it would be well with your soul. Those thoughts were reasonable, and ought to have led you, not only to wish for that assurance of future happiness, but also to strive to secure it.

If to-day you feel a renewal of your anxiety, you have come to an important point in your history. Do not let your concern be

banished. Cherish it, until it leads you to the only true source of peace.

Those who begin to be anxious for their soul are not all affected in the same manner. There are two classes whose feelings and temptations differ. And the advice they need must in some degree be different.

1. There are some whose anxiety is so oppressive, that they strive to banish all thoughts of religion from their minds, and thus free themselves from their distress. Is it thus with you? Do not allow your anxiety to deprive you of the due exercise of your judgment. Your anxiety is exceedingly painful. But there is need for it. You ought to be anxious until the question is settled, and you know what your eternal destiny will be. You apprehend danger; and that danger will not be lessened by shutting your eyes to it. Sailors sometimes, in a terrible storm, when their lives are in fearful peril, will rush to the spirit-room and drink to intoxication, in order to forget their danger. But you feel that such conduct shows their cowardice as well as their folly; that their anxiety and dread of impending shipwreck ought to cause them to strain

every nerve to save the ship and their own lives. Should ship and lives all in consequence be lost, you would condemn their conduct, while you grieved for the awful catastrophe. Do not then act a similar part. Look the danger which threatens you in the face, and seek for deliverance. Forgetting it, cannot help you. While the sailors drank, their shattered vessel was still tossing at the mercy of the winds and the waves. They, by stupefying themselves, had only lost sight of their actual condition. Their fear was gone, but their danger remained.

Remember how unwise it is to banish your anxiety by forgetting the truth. It is rather the part of a wise man to know the truth, and to be guided by it. The truth is your friend. It presents your danger, and awakens your anxiety; but it also points out to you the means of safety and peace.

2. There are some who think that their anxiety is so small, that it would be better to wait until it increases, before they seriously turn their thoughts to the subject of religion. The anxiety of the same person will vary at different times. You perhaps feel less con-

cern now than in former days. You may in consequence suppose that you do not feel enough, and be inclined to put off any further thought until you feel more deeply. Let me beg of you to close your ears to any temptation of this kind. You are inexcusable if you refuse to turn your attention to the great question of your eternal welfare, on the plea that you do not feel a specified degree of anxiety. The very smallest degree of concern is a call to think on the things that pertain to your highest interests. Do you want to feel more anxiety? Then examine fully the situation in which you stand. Do not turn away your thoughts and forget that you have cause to be anxious. Very many of those who have been led onward step by step to the enjoyment of a settled peace in believing in Christ, have at first felt no more than you now feel. But they continued to think on their condition. The more they thought, the more they felt their danger and their need of help. They were constrained, by their increasing sense of danger, to seek for a Saviour. They found that Christ was the Saviour they

needed. They fled to Him, and found in Him a relief from their fears.

To whichever of the two classes I have mentioned you belong, let me say to you that your anxiety is designed to lead you to Christ. This is the only way to obtain relief. You will still toss to and fro in fear and anxiety, until faith in Christ becomes an anchor to your soul. Doubt cannot give you rest. You may doubt every thing; but doubt is not certainty. After all your doubts, that which most you dread may prove to be true. You may doubt the existence of God; but your doubt does not banish Him from the universe. You may doubt whether judgment awaits you; whether merited punishment will overtake you; but your doubt will not alter the laws of God's government, or free you from accountability to Him. You cannot find peace in doubts; you must seek it in certainty.

On what certainty, then, can you rest? The truths of the Bible are the only religious truths of which you can be certain. On these faith can rest. By faith I do not mean a blind trust opposed to reason, or independent of it. Faith is only the proper exercise

of your reasoning powers. Belief rests on evidence. That which we believe is that of whose truth we have evidence. This to us is certainty.

Now there is evidence of the existence of God. There is proof that He is the Governor of the universe. There is sufficient ground for believing that "He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance to all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."* All these things we can know as certainly as we can know any thing. We can rest on them as confidently as on any thing.

And to crown all, the Bible conducts us to the knowledge of Christ Jesus and Him crucified, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace."† That faith which believes, on the ample evidence laid before us, the existence of God and his purposes of mercy in Christ Jesus, can give

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* Acts xvii. 31. † Eph. i. 7.

peace to the soul, and banish its anxiety. And nothing else can.

Cherish then your anxiety, whatever its degree. Let it lead you to examination. In the following chapters the course you should take will be briefly pointed out to you. I do not wish you to cherish your anxiety for the purpose of being unhappy. Far from it. Cherish it, however, until it leads you on through those successive steps which conduct you to Christ. He has promised to his disciples peace. Among his latest words to them, we find the gracious promise, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* When you find peace in him, then your anxiety will vanish as the shades of night before the rising sun.

* John xiv. 27.

CHAPTER II.

BELIEF OF THE SCRIPTURES.

"And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

2 TIMOTHY iii. 15.

THE Scriptures are the only true guide to salvation. The question of the anxious sinner: What must I do to be saved? is one to which God alone could furnish an answer. In the Scriptures that answer is given. They were sent to men because salvation is possible; and their great object is to show how we may secure it. They are able to make us wise unto salvation. That is, they teach you how God can be just, and yet justify the ungodly; and how you may obtain the blessings of pardon, justification, and eternal life. The Bible makes known the character and offices of Christ, the Saviour. It points the way to Him, and tells what it is to walk in Him.

At the very commencement of your inquiries, let this view of the Scriptures be very fully settled in your mind. Remember that they are the only source of the knowledge that you seek. You can add nothing to the teachings of God on this subject. I know that very many persons, in entering upon such inquiries, are disposed to expect more from other sources than from the Bible. They look elsewhere for information and direction, and overlook that one book which contains what they need, and all they need. The preaching of the Gospel, the advice of Christian friends, the reading of religious books, may be very useful. But they are useful only as they bring out and enforce what the Bible says. If they lead you away from that—nay, if they do not constantly lead you to that—they fail in the most essential point.

It is desirable, in the very beginning of this inquiry, to feel that your dependence is on God, and not on man. I shall, therefore, on each point bring before you what his word teaches. Do not look in these pages for any thing new; for any truths other than those

which Christ and His Apostles taught. I shall consider myself happy, if I can secure your attention to what they have uttered. If I wish you to come to Christ, and to walk in Him, it is because the Bible makes it clear that it is your duty and your interest to do so. You will see at once that if the Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation, you must understand their truths, and yield yourself to their instructions, in order to secure this end. In other words, your duty is to believe all that they teach, and to do all that they command.

I take it for granted that you acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures as the word of God, and shall press you closely with all the consequences of that acknowledgment. If, however, you are not satisfied on this point, let me beg of you to seek satifaction as speedily as possible. It is not the design of this little volume to enter into a discussion of the evidences of Christianity. So many able works on this subject already exist, that it is not necessary to do more than to refer you to them for instruction on this point. Let me, however, entreat you to be honest

with yourself. Do not let your doubts on any subject be made an excuse for refusing to do what you know to be your duty. Do not start because I ask you to be honest with yourself. Learn what I mean by honesty, and consider its importance. I mean by this honesty, an unwillingness to deceive yourself; an unwillingness to allow a deceitful heart to keep you from the path of duty. Some persons, when addressed on the importance of attending to religion, invariably seek to excuse themselves by expressing their doubts of the truth of the Bible, or by presenting some difficulty in it which they have not been able to explain. Yet they never make any effort to learn, by thorough examination, whether the Bible is the word of God or not; and seem to think, that because they cannot explain some deep doctrine which it teaches, they may without blame neglect the duties which it plainly commands. Such persons do not deal honestly with themselves. If you are honest, you will do your duty, so far as you see it, without delay or equivocation. Now examine your own heart, and see whether this honesty is yours. If you are not ready

to perform your duty as far as you know it, you are not honest. If you doubt whether the Bible be the word of God, and do not candidly and quickly examine the evidences of its divine origin, you are not honest. What can be done with a man who always doubts, but will never examine, and, in this state of mind, refuses to believe every truth and to perform every duty? His want of honesty makes every effort to benefit him, unavailing. He is deceiving himself. He is his own worst enemy, and will find it so one day to his sorrow. I admit that dishonesty may for a time seem to be advantageous. It only seems so, for in the long run it is strictly true, that "Honesty is the best policy."

Even though you may not be fully prepared to admit that the Scriptures are the word of God, there are two things to which I wish to direct your attention. You know that hundreds and thousands, under the influence of the truths which they teach, have turned from ways of evil, and walked in newness of life. You know that they have lived well and have died happy, because they believed what the Bible teaches, and did what it commands. It is very

probable some of your friends or relatives have thus borne testimony to the power of those truths to make men better and happier. This ought not to be overlooked when asking whether the Bible be from God. Again, you have perhaps yourself, at some time in your life, been affected by what we call the truths of the Bible. Now ask yourself what influence they had upon you. Did they not tend to keep you back from every thing that was low, sensual, base, and unworthy of you; and to impel you to a course of conduct such as best becomes a rational being? You know that they always hindered your entrance on the worse, and always pointed you to the better path. This then you ought to take into the account. Candor and honesty demand that you should admit both of these considerations as proof that the Bible is what it professes to be—a guide to salvation from sin.

But I take it for granted that you are satisfied on this point; that you have so far examined as to concede readily that the Bible is the word of God. Let me beseech you, then, not to shrink from any thing to which such a belief would lead you. Do not confess this

in words, while you deny it in act. Do not draw back, if step by step, as we advance, you are called on to believe fully what God says, and to do promptly what God requires. It is necessary to adopt such a course with you. You will perhaps find that many truths which God has taught, you do not believe, and many duties which he has enjoined, you do not perform. Unbelief—unbelief of God, is the great sin of man. The two great classes into which all men are divided, may be said to be those who believe, and those who do not believe God. While Adam believed God he was happy; when he began to disbelieve he began to sin and to suffer. While men now disbelieve God, they continue to sin; when they begin to believe Him, they begin to return from their wanderings.

God has dealt very kindly in giving a revelation, and very plainly in stating therein the great truths which a sinner must believe in order to be saved. But many go on through life constantly doubting or denying the truth of what God has spoken. You are ready to say that you have been taught from your youth up to believe the Bible. This may all be

very true; yet you may have been constantly doubting, disbelieving, or denying some of the plainest truths which it contains. If, however, you are now prepared to give to each, as it is presented, a prompt and full belief, there is hope in your case. Those who finally perish will be lost because they did not believe the truths of the Bible, which were designed to lead them to salvation. The Apostle says: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that *believe not*, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

CHAPTER III.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

"I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me." Ps. li. 3.

MUCH obscurity is sometimes thrown around the subject of conviction of sin. Some imagine that it consists in a mysterious horror of mind; and so long as their actual feelings do not resemble this, they suppose that they are not convinced of sin. Very many think that until this great distress of mind is felt, they can make no progress in the course that leads to Christ and to peace. They have the whole process of conversion marked out in their own mind, and suppose that it is necessary to pass through it step by step, just as they have pictured it to themselves.

If you have had any such idea, it would be well to banish it at once. It is exceedingly improbable that you will be led to Christ in the precise way that you have supposed. Your

idea of the mode of conversion has doubtless been formed from the case of some person with whose religious history you have become acquainted. But there are very few persons whose characters are alike. And differences of character will cause differences in religious experience. There is a general resemblance in all cases of genuine conversion. But the differences in minor particulars are very great. Probably no two persons can be found whose religious history has been the very same. If, then, you are ever led to Christ, it is very improbable, that the path will be just what you imagined. Look to the plain and simple teachings of the Bible. Believe what it says, and be guided by it.

In conversing with those who are beginning to feel anxiety for the soul, we sometimes find one who is constantly looking for conviction of sin. He may feel much anxiety; yet this is not all that he would have. This is not conviction of sin. He is expecting that something will one day force this conviction upon him. Then he will begin to look in earnest for the way to Christ. Again, we meet with another who is troubled when he thinks of

God, yet does not know that he has ever done any thing that is so very wicked. He does not think that he is any worse than his neighbors; nor can he believe that it would be just for God to deal very severely with him for the very little wrong that he has ever committed.

It would seem at first sight as though these two persons differed very essentially, and that they must need very different advice. But, however different they may be in some respects, they are alike in one essential particular. They are either ignorant of what God has taught in the Bible concerning sin, or they do not believe it fully. Are you like either of these persons? Then I must begin at once to test your belief of the Scriptures. You, doubtless, know what the Bible says of the nature of sin, and of your own sinfulness. Look at some of the statements of the Bible on this subject. What is sin? "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law."* And this "law is holy; and the commandment

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*1 John iii. 4.

holy, and just, and good."* This sin is committed against God, for it is his law. Hence the Psalmist said when looking at his transgression: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."† Mark also the description given of those who sin: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."‡ And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in times past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."§ But are you a sinner? "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."‖ "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."¶

I might bring together a very long list of passages showing the nature, the evil, and the just deserts of sin. But for my present purpose these few will suffice. They present the testimony of God on this subject. But you do not believe it. You have, doubtless, a

* Rom. vii. 12. † Ps. li. 4. ‡ 1 John iii. 8.
§ Eph. ii. 1, 2. ‖ Rom. iii. 23. ¶ 1 John i. 10.

vague idea that what is said of the sinfulness of men is very applicable to others; while you have no clear, steadfast belief that it is true of yourself. You are, perhaps, looking for conviction of sin. It may be that you are praying for it. But can you believe these statements of the Bible, and still be unconvinced? I will not ask you how much you feel at the present time. But do you not know that you have sinned against God, and that it is an exceedingly evil thing to have done so? If you are prepared to admit this, you are convinced of sin, and should at once begin to seek for deliverance from sin, and from the punishment due to it. Or it may be that you do not think that you have ever done any thing so very bad. You are not, indeed, prepared to plead entire innocence; but your sins have been so few, and of such a character, that you think you have no reason for very great anxiety. Have you read what the Bible says? And do you believe it? You may think of your sins as "little sins." But does the Bible regard any sin as a small one? No, you do not believe the Bible. If you did, you would feel that you have done a very great evil in

doing what the God of heaven and earth has forbidden you to do. You would see very sufficient cause for shame and for anxiety. Whatever may be your position, go, study the Scriptures, until you see the true nature and the real evil of sin. Believe what you find recorded in them. A full belief of what God has there taught in regard to your character and conduct, is conviction of sin.

But you may be ready to admit that you are a sinner. You believe what the Bible says, so far that you are now convinced of sin. Yet another difficulty arises. You do not feel as you ought in view of your sins. I am rejoiced that you are willing to lend a listening ear to the testimony of God. I know that the difficulty now in your way, is by no means uncommon. Very many have made precisely the same complaint. Do not suffer yourself to be discouraged by it. Let us rather seek for its cause, and for the means of removing it. We shall find that it originates in the imperfection of your faith, and that here you must apply the remedy.

A person's feelings in regard to his sins may vary very much at different times. So it was

with Judas. He must have felt, when going to the High Priest to betray his Master, that the act was sinful. And when he had seen his Lord led away from the Garden of Gethsemane, he knew that he had done wrong. That is, he was convinced of sin. But he did not feel it as he did afterwards, when he came to his employers, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."* So intense was then his conviction of sin—so loud the reproaches of his conscience, that he threw down the hated reward of his treachery, and went out and hanged himself. What was the cause of this difference of feeling? In going to the Priests at first, he was thinking mainly about the reward to be secured; while the nature of the act was banished as far as possible from his thoughts. But when he saw his Master condemned to death, his thoughts took a different direction. His mind then could not help dwelling on the real nature of his act; and so base and sinful did it appear, and so valueless the once coveted silver; that he threw it down before

* Matt. xxvii. 4.

his employers, and rushed out to self-destruction.

From this example, you may learn a lesson that will be applicable to your present difficulty. You may look at a sinful act in two lights. You may look, on the one hand, at the presumed advantage of the act; or, on the other, at its real character. I do not mean that either of these can be fully banished from the mind. But the attention may be turned, now mainly to the one, and now to the other. You have found it so. In the hour of temptation, you know how clearly you saw the supposed advantages of the act, and how difficult it was to turn your mind fully to its true character. When temptation has been successful, you know that you would not allow your mind to consider fully the question whether the action was right or wrong, or to look at it steadfastly as wrong. And when you have successfully resisted temptation, you know that you kept clearly in mind that it was wrong to yield. In the one case, you looked, as Judas did, mainly at the reward; in the other, your attention was steadfastly turned to the nature of the action.

If, then, you wish to feel more deeply on account of your sin, you must begin to examine carefully the character of your actions. But the law of God does not confine itself to actions alone. It requires that all your thoughts and feelings be right. You must, therefore, examine these also. In order to avoid the confusion that arises from looking at your thoughts, and feelings, and actions, in the mass, and to make the impression on your mind more distinct, it will be well to look first at some particular sin. Your memory will suggest some one. Keep that one before you until you gain a clear idea of its evil as a sin against God. Let the Bible shed its light on its real character. Confine your attention to the thought that it is a violation of the law of God. You ought thus to have thought of it, when your conscience was telling you that it was wrong. Even had you only suspected that it might possibly be wrong, you ought to have paused. But you did not only suspect; you knew that it was wrong. You ought to have looked at its character until you almost abhorred the thought of committing it. You should have kept

your thoughts turned upon its sinfulness until you felt compelled to say: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" But you tried to forget how wrong it was. You kept your attention fixed upon the advantage it would secure to you, and went forward to its commission. Thus you stifled the voice of conscience, and sinned against God. And for that sin you must one day be brought into judgment. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."*

Remember, too, that it was not only once, or twice, or thrice, that you thus sinned. Review your whole life, and number, if you can, how many times you have broken the law of God. Add to this the thought, that you have been thus disobedient while God has continued to bless you; while the invitations of the Saviour have been calling you to the path of holiness. God has had, during your whole life, a just and reasonable claim on you for your service and your love. You cannot think over the comforts and privileges which

* Eccl. xii. 14.

you have enjoyed, without feeling that the claim of God is a very reasonable one. Yet, for days, and months, and years, what service have you rendered to Him—what love have you cherished towards Him? Do you not feel that your course has been marked with continued and inexcusable ingratitude? Are you not satisfied, that when the Bible says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,"—you are justly included in that number? If you feel thus, this is a conviction of sin. Cherish this conviction. Let your thoughts dwell on the exceeding sinfulness of your sin until you are ready to say with the Patriarch, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

* Job xlii. 6.

CHAPTER IV.

REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD.

"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted."—Acts iii. 19.

If you have now begun to feel conviction of sin, the duty which the Apostle Peter pressed on the Jews at Jerusalem, becomes binding upon you. You are now called upon to repent. This is not a mere arbitrary demand that is made upon you. It is necessary from the very nature of things. God does not require it as an atonement for your sins. Your repentance can never in any degree repair the evil that you have done. There is nothing of the nature of satisfaction for sin in the deepest sorrow that you can possibly feel on account of it, nor in the most thorough turning from it.

Why, then, are you called upon to repent? Because without repentance you are not in a fit state of mind to receive blessings from

God. I mean those spiritual blessings, which He is ready to bestow. It is true that God might give you for a residence a mansion in some bright world; that he might furnish it with all that you could desire to make your days pass away in bodily ease. All this He might do without your repentance. But these are only minor blessings. They could not make you happy. This would fall far short of what He has promised to those who come to Christ. To them he promises SALVATION.

Do you feel that such a mansion of beauty as I have supposed, is desirable? Do you think that you would be satisfied, if you could only possess such a residence forever? Could you be content with a mere deliverance from bodily pain and want? If you could, you have not yet believed what the Bible teaches concerning sin. I wish you to weigh well what I say. If any mere change in your outward circumstances, without a thorough change wrought upon your spirit, would satisfy you, then you are not yet convinced of sin. Of course, you do not yet seek, nor really desire, to be saved from sin. That

which you are anxious to secure, is not the salvation which the Gospel promises through Christ: "He saves His people from their sins."* In this case, I must ask you to go back and read again what I have said on conviction of sin.

If, however, you really desire to be saved from sin, you will not be surprised when I say, that you are not, and cannot be prepared to enjoy this blessing without repentance. Some persons seem to suppose that repentance will be wrought in them without any exercise of their own minds. And of all expectations, this is one of the most strange and unreasonable. Repentance is the act of their own minds, and where their minds do not act, there can be no repentance. Repentance implies sorrow for sin, shame for its commission, and a resolution to turn from it. The sorrow arises from a sense of the propriety of obeying God, and of the evil of disobeying him; the shame from a conviction that we ought not to have committed sin; that it was wilful wickedness in us to trans-

* Matt. i. 21.

gress the law of God. When these feelings have possessed the mind, it will not be possible to refrain from a resolution to do no more what has caused us so much shame and grief.

Now you see the necessity for such a state of heart. It is not possible to be saved from sin, unless you sorrow for those already committed; unless you feel ashamed of them; and are resolved to turn from them in future. You may readily see how vain is the expectation of those who wait for God to give them repentance, just as He has given them life, and the various members of their natural body, without any care on their part, or any exercise of their own mind. As well might you hope to teach a blind man, or one who resolutely keeps his eyes closed, to read the pages of this book. The one cannot see the letters, and the other can never learn, until he opens his eyes, and looks upon the characters. So you must open your eyes and look upon your sins, if you are ever to repent.

But you may say, I want to repent, yet cannot. This is a very common complaint, and is uttered with very different feelings by

different persons. Some utter it with the feeling that their professed inability to repent is a valid excuse. They do not really feel any shame for sin, any sorrow for it, or any hearty wish to turn from it. Are you one of this class? Then let me ask you a few questions, in order to assist you in ascertaining your real character and position. You say you want to repent; but what do you mean by repentance? Do you want to feel ashamed of the sins that you have committed; to feel sorrow that you have thus refused to do the will of a God of such goodness, and wisdom, and love; to feel a willingness to bow before Him, and ask Him what He would have you to do? Is this what you mean when you say you wish to repent, but cannot? Let me ask you whether you really believe that you have sinned; that you ought not to have done so; that God is worthy of all your love and all your service? Do you, in short, believe what the Bible says of the wickedness and evil of sin; and yet feel no shame, no sorrow, no willingness to turn from sin? This is impossible. Your real difficulty is your unbelief, or your ignorance of what the Bible teaches on

this subject. Just imagine a man going to a kind friend whom he has grievously offended, and saying: "I believe that I have wronged you; that I ought not to have done so; that you are worthy of that kind and friendly treatment which the warmest love could prompt. Yet I cannot feel ashamed of myself; I cannot feel sorry for what I have done; I cannot resolve to do so no more." Would not his friend look upon this as base hypocrisy, and regard him as adding insult to injury? And are you not doing the very same thing to God? Ah, your difficulty is that you do not believe yourself to be such a sinner as God says you are; nor that sin is such as He represents it to be. This is no excuse for you. You ought to believe what God says of your sin. Every moment's continuance in unbelief is an aggravation of your guilt. I must refer you to what I have said in the preceding chapter. Go back and ponder it well, until you feel that full conviction of sin which it becomes you to exercise.

There is, however, another class of persons, to which I would fain hope that you belong. They, too, complain that they cannot repent.

Yet they do not by any means urge their inability as an excuse. They feel that they are inexcusable. It is themselves they accuse and condemn. They see that God is all justice, and goodness, and love; and they are ashamed and overwhelmed, at the thought of their many offences against Him. Here is the very point of their difficulty. They have such a sense of the worthiness of God to be loved and obeyed, such a conviction of the guilt of sinning against Him, that they feel as though they cannot sorrow sufficiently over their sin, or turn from it with a sufficiently deep abhorrence. What they really mean, when they say they cannot repent, is that they cannot sufficiently exalt God and humble themselves: that they cannot enough admire His goodness and love; nor weep enough over their base ingratitude in sinning so much and so often against Him. This is as it should be. This is something of what Job felt when he said: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself." But he did not think that this was not repentance, for he immediately adds, "And repent in dust and ashes."

This deep self-abasement; this abhorrence of your own self because of your sins; and the desire to be freed from sin because it is sinful; this I say is repentance. The more you know of the goodness and glory of God, and of his amazing love in Jesus Christ, the more deep and thorough your repentance toward God will become.

CHAPTER V.

FAITH IN CHRIST.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Acts xvi. 31.

HAVING now exercised repentance toward God, it becomes your duty to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is possible that in common with many others, you have considered faith in Christ as a very mysterious subject. Many say that they want to exercise faith in Him, but do not know how it is to be done. I am aware that obscurity has been thrown around this subject by attempts to make it plain. Indeed, from the many efforts to make it plain, some naturally draw the inference that it is very obscure. My effort will merely be to throw off the load of explanations, which have prevented some from seeing the plain and simple truth. This will be most readily done by substituting for the expressions, "faith," and "to exercise faith," the words

"belief," and "believe." Every one knows what "belief" and "believe" mean in common life; and they mean nothing else when they come to be used in the phrases, "Belief in Christ," and "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." I say that I shall attempt to give no explanation of the term faith, except to substitute for it the word belief. No other is needed, for "faith" means "belief;" and every man, woman, and child, knows what belief is.

But you are anxious to know what you are to do, when you are told to believe on Christ. You are to believe what God says concerning His Son. Again we come back to our starting point, the absolute necessity of being prepared to believe all that the Bible teaches, and to obey all its commands. Now what does God teach concerning His Son? Let the Bible answer. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."* This is the sum of the gospel. This is the sum of all revelation. It tells of our fallen condition; of the grace and mercy of God; and of the mode in which that grace

* 1 John v. 11.

and mercy are manifested. I say this contains a brief summary of the gospel, and of all revelation; for all revelation bears direct reference to the cross of Christ, the central point of the truths of the gospel.

The same truths are set forth in sundry places in the New Testament in various terms. They all, however, speak of the love of God, and of Jesus Christ as the means by which that love flows down to sinful men. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the

* John iii. 16.

remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."* "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." †

Now this is the record which God has given of his Son. You are asked to believe it. I know that the situation of a sinner convinced of his sin, condemned by the law of God, self-condemned and overwhelmed with shame and penitential sorrow, is a very painful one. It is a belief of God's testimony that has led you thus far, and that has awakened all these painful feelings within your breast. But the testimony of God does not stop with a description of your sin and danger; and do not let your belief of His testimony stop at this point. Believe all that he says. You have believed what he says of your sin and your deserts; believe now what He says of this remedy for sin, and of His own mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. Have you believed that what he says of sin applies to you, because you are a sin-

* Rom. iii, 23, 26. † 1 John i. 7.

ner? Believe, also, for the same reason, that what he says of the remedy for sin is applicable to you. Do you believe that the penalty of God's law belongs to you, because you have broken that law? Believe, also, that the promises of salvation in the gospel belong to you, because you need its pardon and its grace. Yes, the gospel, in all its fulness of grace and mercy, is for just such as you; "for the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."* You are a sinner. You feel this, and mourn over it. But the Bible says—"If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."†

These words are so plain and so clear, that language could not make the meaning more evident. And now has God spoken the truth when He gives such testimony, or has He not? Have you such confidence in God, as a God of truth, as to believe this? But you may ask: Am I to believe that God can be just, and yet justify one so ungodly as I have been? When

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* Matt. xviii. 11. † 1 John ii. 1, 2.

it is said: "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,"—am I to believe that Jesus Christ will advocate my cause? Yes, you are to believe all this. You are to believe that God is willing to save even you; that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son can cleanse away even your sins. But you may still draw back and say: "I cannot believe all this." Cannot believe it! Who gave you the right to doubt? Who gave you the right to despair? No man, however much he has sinned, who feels sorrow for sin, and wishes to be pardoned, has any right to despair of the mercy of God, or to doubt for a moment the willingness of Christ to undertake and to plead his cause. You are not yet willing to give up all your sins, if you are not prepared to banish your unbelief—and to believe what God says on this, as well as on every other subject. Look for a moment at what the Scriptures say of such as stand in your position. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son."*

* 1 John v. 10.

It is hence a very aggravated and grievous sin, to stand with the book of God in your hand, to read therein the clear, full, and distinct promises which he has made, and yet to pause and doubt whether God means what he says.

I know that many trembling souls feel as though their sins had been so great, that it would be presumption in them to believe that God means His promises to apply to them. Do you feel so? Are you saying to yourself that it cannot be possible God should forgive; that Jesus Christ should love you; because you have been such a peculiarly great sinner? I feel for your situation. I am aware that the mercy of God is amazing; that the love of Christ is overwhelming; that it is almost too much happiness to believe that they can reach us. Yet the testimony of God is sure. And you must not allow a sense of your own unworthiness to prevent you from honoring the truth of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. No: believe the amazing truth that God can be just, and yet justify you; that Christ is an advocate, willing to plead even your cause—a Saviour, able to save

to the uttermost, even you. Believe it all; and with a soul melted into deep, and still deeper contrition; go and cast yourself at the mercy seat. Take the cup of salvation, and call joyfully upon the Lord.

CHAPTER VI.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever."—2 PETER iii. 18.

IN the last chapter, I completed all that is necessary to be said in regard to the way to Christ. If you have gone on, step by step, until you have believed in Christ, you begin now a new career. You have not been led to look for any miraculous manifestations of wrath or of glory, to convince you of sin, and to lead you to believe in Christ. There has been one plain and simple requirement made of you at each step—that you believe the testimony of God. If you have done this, you need nothing else. Faith in God, or belief of God's word, is enough to warrant your anxiety, and is able to dispel that anxiety. I presume that you now feel peace with God.

If you believe all that he has promised, you certainly do. You have come to Christ, and cast yourself on Him as your Saviour. You have believed His ability and willingness to save you, and have rested there. A new life now lies before you. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold all things have become new."* You are now to heed the injunction of the Apostle: "As ye have, therefore, received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, and abounding therein with thanksgiving."† You come now to inquire how you shall walk in Christ. To give some general directions on this subject, will be the object of the remaining chapters of this little volume.

But before we proceed, let me caution you particularly on one point. I may with the greatest propriety do it here. Be careful that all the glory of your salvation be freely and heartily given to God. I have in the preceding chapters pressed upon you your

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* 2 Cor. v. 17. † Col. ii. 6, 7.

duty, to believe the word of God. I shall continue to do so. But does this detract from the grace of God, or from the freeness of that grace? Do I for a moment imply that in your belief there is any thing so meritorious as to wipe away past sin, or constitute a claim to future blessings? By no means. The word of God is true, whether you believe it or not—just as true when you doubt, as when you believe. The sun, which God has set in the heavens, shines to give light by day. You may close your eyes, and doubt or deny its shining. Yet it still shines on, whether you believe it or not. Now your believing, or not believing, can no more affect the truth of God's testimony than it can the shining of the sun in the heavens. And what can you merit by believing that the sun shines, and by opening your eyes to its light? The light of the sun is a glorious and free gift of God to men. He has not given it, because they look at it, and rejoice in its light; but they see and rejoice in its light, because He has first freely given it. So with the truths of the Gospel. God has freely given them to men, *in order* that they may

believe and rejoice in them, not *because* they believe and rejoice in them. You will never rejoice in the light of the sun, unless you open your eyes to its glory. Nor will you ever feel the power of the truths of the Gospel to cheer the heart and make it happy, unless you believe them. They derive their power to make happy from the free and sovereign grace of God, not from your belief. Your belief gives you no claim, except to that which God, of His own free and sovereign grace, promises to you. It is not because you believe, that God promises you pardon and peace. It is, however, because you believe that you enjoy these blessings.

I have dwelt on these thoughts, because you ought to see clearly, at this stage of your course, that you are a debtor to mercy alone; and to walk humbly and thankfully before God hereafter. I wish you at once to bring your heart to confess the sovereignty of God, and to love the precious truth, that God is a sovereign, in the works of grace, as well as in those of nature. I wish you heartily to believe that "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the

gift of God."* If you cannot believe this truth, and rejoice in it; if you are not satisfied that in all things God should reign; you do not yet comprehend and believe what the Scriptures reveal of the character of God. I would fain hope, that any hesitation you may still feel on this point, arises solely from the fact that you do not yet form just conceptions of the glory of Jehovah's character; and that as you increase in the knowledge of Him, your delight in His sovereignty will increase. The redeemed in heaven never forget that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. They never lose sight of the truth, that by His sovereign grace they are saved; and never cease ascribing all the glory to God and the Lamb.

Having now begun a new life, you are to grow in grace. There can be no such thing as remaining stationary. No man is to-day what he was yesterday; nor will he be to-morrow what he his to-day. He is daily and hourly forming habits, either good or bad. He is either better or worse each day than he

* Eph. ii. 8.

was the day before. He can more easily resist temptation, or is more inclined to yield to it. Every duty performed, makes the next more easy. Every duty neglected, makes the performance of the next more difficult and more unlikely. Such is the change that is going on from day to day in the mind and the character of men.

What is now required of you, is the formation of such habits of love to God, and of obedience to Him, that walking in the way of his commands will be easy and pleasant to you. The thorough mastery over every evil in your heart, is a gradual work. Old habits are not broken up, and new ones formed, in a day. By some sudden influence, sudden changes may be wrought for a season; yet, in the course of time, the old trains of thought may come back, and the old course of conduct be once more entered upon. Very many persons have apparently come to the point which you have now reached. They thought their new feelings of joy could never change. They imagined that they had nothing now to do but to be happy throughout their whole life, without any special care or

effort on their part. But such have found a change coming on, in the lapse of time. Their old habits came back upon them; their joy began to fade away; their duty became often difficult to perform; they neglected it once and again. Thus they gradually slid back, until they could scarcely tell wherein they differed from what they were before they professed to have hope in Christ. This, certainly, is not the course to which the Bible calls the Christian. It is not growth in grace. I mention such cases, not that I expect you to do the same; but because you are liable to follow their course, unless you are exceedingly careful. I warn you of the danger of imitating such persons; yet I hope better things of you, though I thus speak.

The only way to form a habit of doing any thing, is to begin, and to continue regularly in the practice of it. Suppose you wish to cultivate the habit of early rising. It will not do to rise early to-day, and neglect it to-morrow. You must day after day refuse to take a little more sleep, and a little more slumber, after the hour of rising has come. Every time that you neglect to rise early,

you hinder the formation of the habit. Continue, however, to rise regularly with the dawn for weeks and months, and it becomes at last a fixed and pleasant habit, which no ordinary temptation could induce you to break. It is precisely so in all habits. There must be a beginning right; and then the right course must be patiently continued.

You want now to form the habit of that prompt, and cheerful, and hearty obedience, which springs from love. You love God, because He has first loved you; you love Christ, because His love for you has been so richly manifested. Hear, then, what Christ says: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."* It must be your constant effort to learn more and more of the character of God and of Christ, so that you may love them more. And as you love God more, the more perfect and acceptable will be your obedience. The angels above know God, and love Him with perfect love. Hence they are swift to do His bidding. Knowledge, love, and obedience, there constitute their happiness. Let them constitute

* John xiv. 15.

yours also. I have said the greater your love, the more perfect your obedience. I wish you to form the habit of rendering such obedience as will be most pleasing to God. Your object in obedience ought to be to please Him. You will not, then, be satisfied without knowing precisely what your duty is. If you wish to please Him, you will not think of presenting any thing as obedience except that very thing which He requires of you. Nor will you be content to remain ignorant of what it is that God requires, so long as there is a possibility of ascertaining it. I wish you to look at these two points particularly, and to learn from them what obedience from the heart, obedience that springs from love, is.

Watch day by day over your heart, and examine your obedience. Make it your aim to cultivate a truly obedient spirit. If you are not ready to inquire for the will of God until you learn what it is; or if you feel any secret unwillingness to do the very thing he enjoins; go back to the cross of Christ. It was your unwillingness to know your duty, and to do it when known, that had its share in causing Him thus to suffer. Look at the influence

your disobedience exerted in causing that shameful and painful death of the Son of God. It was because you sinned, that He bled. Can you, with this before your mind, refuse to seek for the will of God concerning you? Can you shrink from doing with promptness the will of Him who has loved you and given himself for you?

I know that you cannot withstand such an appeal as the dying love of Christ makes to your heart. Begin then at once to ask for His will. Spare no pains in order to know precisely what it is. In great things and in small things, now and forever, be resolved to know, if possible, the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Go to the Scriptures in order to learn what God requires, and with a firm resolution to do it with your might, to do it heartily as unto the Lord. Pursue steadfastly such a course, and you will grow in grace daily. Your path will be that of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day.

CHAPTER VII.

BAPTISM.

And now, why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized. Acts xxii. 16.

We come now to a point where your spirit of obedience is to be put to the test. In immediate connection with belief in Christ, the Scriptures place baptism. The promise of Christ is: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* In various instances in the Acts of the Apostles, we find that baptism followed immediately on the exercise of faith in Christ. The Apostle in writing to the Romans says, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."† And in addressing the Colossians, he uses similar language: "Buried with

* Mark xvi. 16. † Rom. vi. 4.

Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead."* "If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."† In all cases, the duty of baptism is placed immediately after faith; and the rising from baptism is emblematical of an entrance on a new character and a new life. This is the teaching of Scripture; and to its instructions you must always lend a willing ear; to its commands you must always render a cheerful obedience. It is then your duty now to yield obedience to this command of Christ.

Do you shrink from this public step? Many hesitate when this duty is presented; although they can scarcely assign the reason of their unwillingness to perform it. It may be that you feel something of this hesitancy. Let us, then, look at the possible causes from which it arises. Some feel a kind of secret shame, which, perhaps unknown to themselves, deters them. You probably know many, who would look on you with a kind of contempt, if you

* Col. ii. 12. † Col. iii. 1.

should be baptized in obedience to Christ's command. You can name some, perhaps, whose contempt, however they might see fit to express it, you would not choose to meet. Perhaps you have thought that this, that, and the other person, might be present at your baptism; and the possibility of this is unpleasant to you. You would probably rather not have them to be thus made aware of your determination to lead a life of obedience to Christ. You had hoped, it may be, that you could be a Christian without the knowledge of many of your friends and acquaintances. The publicity of baptism startles you. Have such thoughts as these ever entered your mind? Have they any thing to do with your unwillingness to be baptized? If so, it looks very much like being ashamed of Christ. You do not mean it thus. But by what other name can it be called? If you fear to take such a public step, because of what man may think or say, you forget that sin only is to be dreaded, and that God alone is to be feared. ¶ Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and for-

gettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?"* You forget Christ, and His words, and His example. Look at His love to you. Look at the contempt, the revilings, the agony, the death, which He endured, before He finished the work on which all your hopes rest. If you bring these thoughts up before your mind, I know that you will soon become ashamed of your shrinking from the duty to which He calls. You will soon be prepared to say:

> "Didst Thou dear Saviour, suffer shame,
> And bear the cross for me?
> And shall I fear to own Thy name,
> Or Thy disciple be?"

You will count it your glory and your joy, to follow your Lord whithersoever He may lead you.

It is possible, however, that your hesitation springs from a fear that your feelings may change; that your resolutions may prove too weak when the time of trial comes; and that

* Isa. li. 12, 13.

by your want of steadfastness, you may, at some future day, injure the cause of Christ. These feelings of anxiety and self-distrust are by no means to be condemned. You should rather cherish them as one of the best means of preventing the evil you fear. It is proper to cultivate self-distrust; but you should never for a moment give way to distrust of God. In Him and in his promises, exercise at all times the fullest confidence. You cannot expect to conquer, by your own strength, the foes that oppose you. Christ says expressly: "Without me ye can do nothing." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine: no more can ye except ye abide in me."* But he adds the gracious promise: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."† It was in reliance on this promised assistance, that Paul went forward amid toils and trials. And after a long experience of the faithfulness of Him who had promised, he said: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."‡

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* John xv. 4. † John xv. 7. ‡ Phil. iv. 13.

Now what you must do, is simply to look at the promises of God; to believe them in all their fulness; and to act as though you did believe. They are spoken for such persons as yourself; for those who feel their own weakness, and their need of the help of God. Thousands who, at the outset, had quite as much fear of their own hearts as you have, can bear testimony to the faithfulness of God. Multitudes, in the help of God, have finished their course, and have secured the end of their faith, "even the salvation of their souls." And multitudes, who are now on their way to join them, can say that the promises of God have never failed them. Do not fear that they will ever fail you. Trust yourself in His hands. Weak though you may be; "To them that have no might He increaseth strength."* Even though it may seem as difficult for you to pursue the Christian course, as for Peter to walk the waters of the sea of Galilee, do not fear to try it at the Saviour's bidding. He calls you by that path to Himself. As long as Peter did not doubt, he walked firmly; and

* Isa. xl. 29.

even when his faith failed, and he began to sink, his Lord did not forsake him. While the Saviour's lips chided his unbelief, His hand upheld his sinking head. With the same kindness Christ calls to you; and with the same tenderness will He watch over your steps. Dismiss, then, your fear, and do the duty of each day, trusting that, with each new duty, you will receive new strength from on high. It is only by doing the duty of to-day, that you can hope for strength to perform that of to-morrow. Therefore, let it be your anxious care to know what is required of you to-day, and to do that, trusting all the future with God.

It is possible, however, that you have difficulties of a different nature. You may have been informed that you were baptized in your infancy. If this be so, you doubt whether it is proper for you to be baptized now. You cannot see that it is your duty. Your mind is not at rest on the subject; yet you fear to take a step which may be wrong. Or perchance, though you are satisfied that it is your duty to be baptized, you are in doubt as to the mode in which the ordinance should be performed. You are at a loss to determine whether

it is properly administered by sprinkling or pouring, or whether immersion is necessary.

If either of these cases be yours, you are now in a situation to test your desire to please and obey God. I hope that you will prove to yourself, and especially to Him with whom you have to do, that you are not content to remain ignorant of your duty; nor disposed to shrink from the performance of it, when once it is made known to you. Let me press upon you a sense of your accountability, as you first meet the question before you. You are now called upon to think and act for yourself. It will not do for you to enter on your Christian course, without feeling that this responsibility is resting on you. Through the whole of your life, you will be called upon to think, and judge, and act for yourself. This is demanded of every Christian. And you must give account, at last, as well of your thinking and judging, as of your actions. You are accountable for the manner in which you form your decision in regard to your duty, and for the fidelity with which you perform it, when your decision is made.

Do not then be surprised or disheartened,

if you find it difficult, sometimes, to decide between two courses, which is right, and which is wrong. It is a part of that system of trial under which God has placed you. It will tend to show what is in your heart. You will, at some future time, look back over your past life as did the Jews of old. "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no."* In order to prepare your mind to judge in cases of doubt, take care that the heart be right. If you would guard against the risk of being misled by your own feelings or prejudices, you must be desirous to know precisely what it is that God requires, and be willing to do it when known.

You are now in doubt about the path of duty. It might be vastly agreeable to you, were an angel from heaven to come and solve your doubts, and point you to the path of duty. But angels are not sent on such mes-

* Deut. viii. 2.

sages in our day. You have the Bible. You must take that, and decide on your duty according to what it teaches. Are you willing now to enter on an examination of the Bible, with a sincere desire to know what is required of you? If you are, give yourself no rest until your mind is satisfied, and until you know the grounds on which that satisfaction rests. The question before you is one that has been discussed at length. Perhaps much of controversy would have been avoided, had the course which I urge you to adopt, been always implicitly followed. Go to the examination with your heart right in the sight of God, and during its progress, keep your heart right, and I have no fear for the issue. It need neither be a long, nor an unprofitable investigation.

Perhaps some may recommend that you should not turn your thoughts, at this important period in your history, to such a controverted point. Far be it from me to sanction such advice. Suppose you have been baptized in your infancy. To rest in this, while you feel that the will of Christ, as presented in the New Testament, may possibly

require you to be baptized, as your own act, on your sincere profession of faith in Him,—does not savor much of genuine, hearty obedience. Suppose, again, you resolve to be baptized. To go forward to this ordinance without being convinced that the rite, to which you submit, is that which Christ enjoins on you, will not be a very acceptable service to Him. He wishes His disciples to know His will, and to perform every act, because they believe it is what He demands of them.

You may be assailed by different persons in a variety of ways. It may be said that you were baptized in infancy, and that it would be disrespectful to your parents to deny the baptism to which they brought you; or that it would be a grievous sin to submit yourselves again to the ordinance. Another will say, that even if it was not the proper time and manner of administering the ordinance, yet it has been done, and the responsibility will be with those who brought you to it. Perhaps you will be told that your public profession of faith in Christ, being a ratification of the vows made in your name when

you were baptized, has precisely the same effect, as if you were to be baptized now, and now take the vows of God upon you.

I cannot attempt to enumerate all that may be said to you. Let me merely remark, that you have a personal duty that is undoubtedly yours. You must examine the Scriptures so far, that your own mind shall become satisfied in regard to the path of duty; and then you must pursue it. Your chief concern must be to please God; and what will most please Him, will be your prompt and simple-hearted obedience to Him. It is vastly important for your present and future peace, that you now act understandingly. It may be hard to think of taking a course different from that which your parents took; but Christ says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."* You are to act in this matter as a disciple of Christ. You are to choose and to follow your course, not because thus your parents or friends did, but because it is what Christ commands.

Are you doubtful as to the mode of bap-

* Matt. x. 37.

tism? Some may tell you that you are too young in the Christian life, to enter on the examination of this subject; that wise and good men are not agreed with respect to it; that, at the last day, it will not be asked how much water was used in your baptism. Your own feelings, I trust, will teach you how to look on all such advice as this. It savors too little of the spirit which the Gospel inculcates, to be very acceptable to one who is eager to know his Lord's will, that he may perform it. I trust that your love to Christ will prompt you to pause, until you have ascertained which is the mode that Christ has enjoined, or until your own mind becomes satisfied that it matters not what mode you adopt.

Such advice as that to which I have referred, may, however, eventually lead persons who are not on their guard, to commit themselves to a certain opinion and practice. And when they come at last, if ever they do come, to examine the ground on which they stand, it increases tenfold their difficulty. You may be led to dodge the question now. But if you do, it will come again and again; and will, I fear, again and again be put aside, and finally

be left unsettled. We cannot hope much for the future hearty obedience to God, and the future peace, of those who are afraid to look any question of practical duty in the face, at that very point where God has placed it. The question of baptism He has placed at the beginning of the Christian course. I regret that it has come to be such a controverted subject. Men have made it so. They have surrounded it with discussion and difficulty. Yet we must not move it from the place that God has assigned to it; nor encourage those, who are called upon to meet it, to neglect that examination which alone can prepare them to render an intelligent obedience, and to offer an acceptable service to God. Whatever path you take as you advance, take it understandingly, and in the fear and love of God.

Go to the Scriptures. Make them your study. Let your inquiries be directed to two points — what are the proper subjects? — what is the proper mode of baptism? I could of course give you a dissertation on this subject. But while you have the Bible, and can probably obtain books that contain all that I

could desire to say, I need not fill up the few pages allotted to this subject with the discussion. I am confident that if you go to the New Testament alone, without any other book, or any other counsellor, you may readily come to a correct decision. Of course, you will understand that you must go in the spirit of obedience which I have described. You must be prepared to embrace all that the New Testament teaches, and to reject all that is not supported by its authority. I am persuaded that you will seek in vain for any command for the baptism of infants, or any example of the administration of that rite by the Apostles or their fellow-laborers. And if neither command nor example can be found, you can be at no loss in judging of the Scriptural authority that can be claimed for the rite. That such proof is wanting, is a sufficient reason for believing that it was not commanded by Christ. You will then be shut up to the necessity of obeying his command to be baptized "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost."* As to

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

the mode, I doubt not, that your examination of the New Testament will lead you to the conviction that it is your duty to be buried with Christ in baptism; that is, to be immersed in water on a profession of your repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I would hope, that your love toward God will make your obedience to His command prompt and cheerful. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous."*

* 1 John v. 3.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"This do in remembrance of me." Luke xxii. 19.

"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25, 26.

In the arrangements made for His people, Christ has had two things in view; to keep alive in the minds of His disciples their obligations to Him, and to show forth those obligations to others. You have now obeyed the command of Christ, and have been baptized in His Name. The access to the table of the Lord is opened to you, and you are bid to come and partake. The service, as described in the New Testament, is plain and simple.

Yet it is full of meaning. There is no pomp and show in the ordinance. But there is much to awaken thought, much to arouse feelings of awe, of sorrow, of wonder, and of love. You are bid, in this bread and in this cup, to look on the emblems of suffering and of death. The body broken—the blood shed, you are to take, and eat and drink these emblems. Pause as you enter on this sacred service, and let the thoughts, which it is adapted to awaken, arise in your mind. You are led to a suffering, a dying Saviour.

Why did He suffer?—Why did He die? Ah, it was for sin that body was broken, and that blood was shed! Here shines out the justice of a God of holiness; who spared not His own Son, but deemed it necessary that He should drink this bitter cup, or that men must suffer for their own sins. Let your soul be filled with awe in view of such a fact as this.

But for whom did He suffer, for whom did He die? It was for you. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes

we are healed."* Do not turn away from the mournful truth; nor repress the emotions which a sense of your sin forces upon you. You need to look at the plain truth, sad and humiliating as it is. That bread and that wine speak to you of your guilt. You have had a direct, personal influence in the sufferings and the death which they bring to mind. Well may you feel humbled and sorrowful, as your sin and its consequences are thus distinctly set before you. You are bid to look at Christ in the Garden, at Christ on the Cross; brought to that fearful agony, to that shameful death, by sin in which you have shared. Your heart, long closed to the commands of God, to the love of the Saviour, must condemn you. You confess it all. You say with the poet,

"Flow fast my tears! the cause is great;
This tribute claims an injured Friend:
One whom I long pursued with hate,
And yet he loved me to the end.

"Fast flow my tears; yet faster flow,
Stream copious as yon purple tide;
'Twas I that dealt the deadly blow,
I urged the hand that pierced His side."

* Isa. liii. 4, 5.

Let these feelings have their due course; let this shame and this sorrow work in you their proper results. Let them cause you to shudder at the thought of ever again falling into sin. What fearful consequences have followed your transgressions! How exceedingly evil your sins have been! Let the remembrance make you watch and pray with intense earnestness, that you may not hereafter fall into temptation.

And as you meditate on the sufferings and death of Christ, does not your wonder increase, that the Son of God should have stooped so low for such an object; that He should have endured so much for those who were enemies to Him? Look at the representation of the Apostle: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* Before one emotion of gratitude, or of love towards

*Rom. v. 6–8.

Him, arose in your heart, the Saviour had passed through all His fearful sufferings for you. Turn to the Gospels, and read again and again the account of the hours of deep suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane; of the seizure of Christ; of His cruel mockings; of his condemnation; of His progress to the place of crucifixion; and of His endurance of that horrible death. Pause on each particular, and ask, what would have tempted you to endure the same? You cannot conceive of the full intensity of the Saviour's sufferings; but you can form such a conception of them, as to make you wonder that any one could endure them even for the dearest friend. How much greater the wonder, that they should have been borne for enemies! How passing strange that Christ should have thus shown His love for you! Often at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Christians unite in singing those familiar words:

"Why was I made to hear Thy voice
And enter while there's room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come."

It is indeed a cause of wonder, that the feast was ever spread—that the sacred body of Christ was ever broken—His precious blood ever shed,—and not less a wonder that you were inclined by His grace to come and partake.

The natural effect of this love of Christ, is to awaken love in your heart. This is the great controlling principle of the Christian life. Hence the Apostle says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."* So long as love is active in your heart, you will be most surely protected from the evil that is in the world, and will most surely meet the demands of Christ upon you. It is your love that He wants; and He seeks it by exhibiting to you His own loveliness and love. It will be of little avail to excite in your mind feelings of awe, of sorrow, and of wonder, unless all tend to increase your love to Him who has satisfied the justice of God;

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* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

who has borne your sins; who has loved you, and given Himself for you.

The increase of love will be attended with an increase in every other virtue. To be made perfect in love, is to be made perfect in holiness. To decrease in love, is to decrease in holiness. Look at the charge brought against the Church at Ephesus: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."* To say that it had left its first love, was condemnation enough. To keep this first love, and to increase it, is the effect of this ordinance, when it is observed in a proper spirit. The emblems chosen, point to that sacrifice, and to those sufferings, which are the strongest proof of His amazing love to you. They appeal to every feeling of gratitude in your heart. As oft as you partake of these emblems, do it in remembrance of Christ. As oft as you go forth from this solemn ordinance, let it be with a more ardent love to Christ, and a more active zeal for His cause.

* Rev. ii. 4.

CHAPTER IX.

PRIVATE DEVOTION.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."—MATT. vi. 6.

WE come now to the consideration of a subject of vital importance to your future happiness and usefulness. Your private devotions will, in a very great degree, mould your external life. If your closet is neglected, your public duties will be neglected, or be performed without that fervency of zeal which ought to characterize you. On the other hand, a faithful observance of the duty of secret devotion will show itself in fervent zeal, and in a life of active godliness.

I have not space for all that might be said on this subject. You need now a few general directions, and these I will attempt to give. If I were to give a brief definition of private

devotion, I should say that it consists of communion with God—that is, of direct conversation with Him. The direct address which the soul makes to God, is private devotion. The character of the address to Him will vary with the feelings, which fill the heart of the worshipper. When a sense of your own wants, or those of others, presses upon your mind, your words will be words of prayer. When the majesty, the goodness, and the glory of God, fill your thoughts, you will give vent to your feelings in adoration and praise. Prayer will, doubtless, always constitute a large part of your addresses to God; and to this let me particularly call your attention. If you pray aright, you will need but little exhortation to praise. He who abounds in prayer, and who prays in a proper manner, will need no one to teach him how to praise.

When addressing yourself in prayer to God, you should pay attention to two things—the manner in which you pray, and the petitions that you ask of Him. We will consider these separately.

First—how shall you pray? When you

make a request to one of your fellow-creatures, it is implied that you really want what you ask for; that you believe him to be able to grant it: and that you have a hope of his willingness to do so. If you did not really care for the favor, it would be unnecessary to ask for it. If you did not believe that he was able to grant it, it would be useless to present your request. If you had no hope that he would bestow it upon you, there would be no encouragement to offer your petition. I wish you to look carefully at these three things which a request implies; and let them teach you how to make your prayer to God. Let the desire for the particular blessing you seek exist in your heart. This will prevent all rash and thoughtless prayer. You will not then utter a mere string of words. You will have a clear idea of your wants, and this will give earnestness to your prayer. You will also see that you must think before praying. Meditation and self-examination will then constitute a part of your private devotion. They are exercises necessary to prepare you for prayer. Do not, therefore, slight them, if you wish to pray with a clear understand-

ing of your wants. It will also be profitable to dwell on the ability of God to do for you what you ask of Him. Distinct ideas of the great power of God, and of His supreme control in heaven and on earth, will aid your faith. Take notice of the prayer of the disciples, after Peter and John had been threatened by the rulers of the Jews, and forbidden to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. It commences with a brief and forcible statement of the power and majesty of God. "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is."* The people of God in all ages have found it very profitable, in making their prayer to Him, to call to mind His sovereign power. But what reason have you for hoping that He will grant your petitions? You must again examine the Scriptures. Look at the following passages. "He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of such as diligently seek Him."† "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us."‡ If you are certain that your petition accords

* Acts iv. 24. † Heb. xi. 6. ‡ 1 John v. 14.

with the will of God, as that will is made known in the Scriptures, you can urge it with more than a mere hope—you can present it in the fullest confidence that it will be granted. The words of the Apostle are clear on this subject: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."* Surely you could not ask greater encouragement to pray.

Even when you cannot be certain that your petition is in accordance with the will of God, you are not necessarily to refrain from offering it; nor without reason for hoping that it will be granted. You may present it with the confident expectation, that if it be right and proper, He will give you the desire of your heart. Leave it with Him to decide. You know that He is possessed of all wisdom and goodness. He has already given you so much, that you ought to believe in His willingness to gratify your wish, if it will be for your good,

* 1 John v. 14, 15.

and for the glory of His own name. "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things."* He is quite as watchful for your interests as you yourself can possibly be. Nay, had He not been more careful for you than you were for yourself, He would not have taken such pains to stop you in the way of sin, and to bring you to the path of holiness. You can then make your request with lively hope, and leave Him to show, by granting or withholding it, what His will concerning it is. When His will is known, I trust you are fully prepared to make that will yours.

Secondly. For what shall you pray? You will observe that I have touched on this in the preceding remarks. It is necessary, however, to dwell further on it. You wish to collect the directions of the Scriptures on this as on other points. As you form the habit of asking what the Bible teaches, you will be surprised, perhaps, to find on how many subjects it gives you the very information you need. I shall bring forward a few passages for the

* Rom. viii. 32.

purpose of answering your inquiry. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."* The duty here is so plain, that any explanation or comment is needless. And notice what a motive you have to be earnest in such prayer, in the assurance that this is good and acceptable to God your Saviour. Your heart prompts you to please your Saviour by every means in your power. Here is one means. He is pleased when you feel as one of the great family of man, and remember that all men are your brethren; and pray or give thanks for all. He wishes you to feel for every human want, and to be grateful for every human blessing; in other words, to "Rejoice, with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."†

If you give much time to this prayer for others, you will find it a means of great bless-

* 1 Tim. ii. 1–3. † Rom. xii. 15.

ing to yourself. Like all acts of benevolence, it brings its own reward with it. It will be well to separate mankind into different classes, and to pray specially for each. In the morning, think of the multitudes who arise to enter on life's active duties. What various characters and situations, and what various wants! Commend them all and severally to Him whose eye alone sees all, and knows the different wants of each. In the evening, think of the varied classes that have, with yourself, arrived at the end of the day. Some in weariness, some in sorrow, some in pain, some in fearful peril, come to its close. Some come from working the work of God, and some from the hard service of sin. Think of them all, and for all make your prayer to God. Pray for all who need either temporal or spiritual mercies from Him; and for every item of human happiness, let your thanksgiving ascend. And forget not to give thanks to God, that a world, in which sin so much abounds, is still upheld by Him, and that still His word invites, and His Spirit strives with the children of men.

"Let supplications, prayers, intercessions,

and giving of thanks be made for all men," says the Apostle. In order to discharge this duty properly, you ought to try to form a clear conception of the vast multitude you are to present before God; and you should endeavor to become familiar with the situations in which they are placed. Among the "all men," are included those of every tribe, and nation, and people. Hottentots, Hindoos, Burmans, Chinese,—all are included, as well as those who dwell in our own or other, so called, Christian lands. If you would pray understandingly for these, you must learn something of their character, their circumstances, and their wants. It is no easy thing to be a Christian, resolved to do all his duty, and to do it in such a manner as must certainly please his Lord. You have seen enough in your progress through these chapters to be satisfied, that ignorance is no part of a Christian's duty. You must gather knowledge; you must learn to think, if you would be faithful in the discharge of every duty which your Saviour enjoins upon you. Acquaint yourself, then, as far as possible, with the condition of your fellow men; and let your knowledge prepare

you to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks on their behalf.

I have placed prayer for others, first, because such is the course which the Scriptures adopt. You will remember, that first among the petitions in the Lord's Prayer He has placed—"Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven."* Petitions for personal blessings follow those for the glory of God's name, and the extension of his cause. A sufficient reason for this order is found in the fact, that these are the greater blessings. In asking for the glory of God's name, and the coming of His kingdom, you, of course, ask more than when you pray for some temporal or spiritual good for yourself. But another reason for dwelling on this class of petitions first, arises from the fact, that it is peculiarly liable to be overlooked. You are much more likely to forget the wants of others than your own, when you pray. Be especially careful, therefore, to keep in mind the model of prayer which Christ has left you. I would fain hope that

* Matt. vi. 9. 10.

you may often become so much absorbed in supplication for others, and in ardent longing to see the name of God glorified throughout the whole world, as to lose sight, in a measure, of your own wants. Something of this ardent longing for the good of others, and comparative indifference to mere self-interest, seems to have been known to the Apostle Paul. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness, in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."* Here is the yearning of a deep, unselfish love, showing itself in a willingness, if such a thing were possible, himself to be separated from Christ, in order that others might be saved. The expression is very strong. How strong then must have been the feeling that prompted it? Strive to cultivate a deep and abiding sympathy with the wants and woes of men. Let men of every class and nation share constantly in your prayers. If you read the

* Rom. ix. 1–3.

lives of eminent Christians, you will notice how much they abounded in prayer for others. Imitate their example.

But you are also to pray for yourself—for blessings that are strictly personal. Let me first direct your attention to a subject on which I have not yet dwelt—the necessity of the Holy Spirit's aid. I have not omitted it until the present, because I have a low estimate of its importance. I should have studied the sacred Scriptures, and Christian experience, to little purpose, if I had failed to discover the primary importance of the work of the Holy Spirit. I would urge you to think much of the Holy Ghost; of His work and His love. I cannot press this upon you too strongly. If you fail to do honor to the power, the grace, and the love of the Holy Ghost, you cannot walk in Christ, as firmly, as steadily, and as happily, as I could desire. Observe the importance which Christ attaches to the work of the Holy Ghost: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall send you another comforter, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth

Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."† Throughout all His addresses to His disciples, on that evening before He was taken from them, the Saviour was constantly referring them to the coming of the Comforter. Thus he assures them: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."‡ The Apostle Paul exhorts his brethren to do honor to the Holy Ghost, and to obey His admonitions. "Quench not the Spirit."§ "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by which ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."‖ The work of the Spirit in sealing the believer, he thus describes: "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which

* John xiv. 16, 17. † John xiv. 26. ‡ John xvi. 7.
§ 1 Thess. v. 19. ‖ Eph. iv. 30.

is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory."* "The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier."† "He is the witness or evidence that God dwelleth in us, and we in God."‡ But I need not here dwell more at length on the offices of the Holy Ghost. It is enough to have turned your attention to it. What I wish now to do, is to show you the encouragement you have to pray for His continual presence. Of course I suppose you feel the need of this gift. You will remember that David, in the hour of his bitter humiliation and self-condemnation, prayed to God, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."§ This should also be your earnest prayer. For your encouragement, let me quote the words of Christ: "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask Him."‖ Make this, then, your constant prayer.

I cannot bring together all the passages

* Eph. i. 13, 14. † 1 Pet. i. 2. ‡ 1 John iii. 24—iv. 13.
§ Ps. li. 11. ‖ Luke xi. 18.

which show for what you should pray. I will, however, quote a few, in order to show how you may yourself gather from the Scriptures the teaching you need. "If any man ask wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."* "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."† "Is any among you afflicted, let him pray."‡ "Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."§ Let us sum up the directions contained in these few passages, and notice the kinds of requests which you are authorized to make for yourself to God. You are to pray for wisdom; for mercy, and grace, to help in time of need. Are not wisdom, and mercy, and grace, such as this, enough to cover all your spiritual wants? Moreover, in order to complete the whole circle of wants, and to warrant you to bring every thing that con-

* James i. 5. † Heb. iv. 16. ‡ James v. 12.
§ 1 Peter v. 6, 7.

cerns you to God, in affliction you are to pray, and in all circumstances you are to cast all your care upon God, for He careth for you. Go, then, with all your folly, and sin, and weakness, and trials, and cares, to the mercy seat, and there make your requests unto God. He is "rich in mercy,"* and will "supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."†

In order to attend properly to your private devotion, have your closet—your place of retirement—where you can be alone with God. If you can have a stated place and stated hours for prayer, you will find them to conduce very much to your enjoyment of the exercise. They will also exert an influence in the formation of devotional habits. Regularity is exceedingly desirable. To bring yourself, at the same hours each day, to the same place, for the purpose of communing with God, will be one of the very best means of keeping your devotional spirit from being chilled by contact with the world.

I cannot leave this subject without some

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* Eph. ii. 4. † Phil. iv. 19.

further remarks on meditation, and the reading of the Scriptures. They are means to prepare you for communion with God, and should form a part of your private devotion. You, perhaps, wish to know what I mean by meditation. I mean simply a frequent thinking on the great truths which the Bible teaches. You know very well, that the things we seldom think of, will not affect our hearts very much. The only way to keep up a deep interest in any subject, is to think much upon it. You are liable to be so much engaged with the things that are seen, as to forget in a measure those that are out of sight. The Christian's life is a life of faith. You need constantly to have faith in exercise. The sacrifice on Calvary; the death of Christ for our sins; His rising for our justification; His intercession in heaven; the operation of the Holy Spirit; the God to whom we pray; the heaven in which he dwells—all are unseen by us. They are unseen, but not the less real. If, then, you wish that these realities should produce their proper effect upon your heart, you must think of them. You may possibly find some difficulty

in thinking profitably; but you must not give it up. God has made you to think. He calls you to live a life of faith; but faith implies thinking; and, consequently, a life of faith is a life of thinking. You have the Scriptures to furnish you with subjects of thought. Let your reading set you to thinking, and your thinking again lead you to reading. Try to understand every thing that you read. Do not be satisfied to pass over a large portion of the Scriptures without getting their meaning. You must try to understand the thoughts they are designed to convey. A few verses thoroughly understood, will be more profitable to you than a long series of chapters from which you gather no clear ideas. You may often be ready to say with the Eunuch: "How can I understand unless some man should guide me?"* But do not adopt such language until you have made an attempt to understand for yourself what you read. What you fail, after a resolute attempt, to understand, mark in your mind, and ask some one who may possibly be able

* Acts viii. 31.

to explain it. This kind of study of the Scriptures will be a very excellent aid to meditation. If you carry it on daily, you will have each day something profitable to think about. As the different truths of the Bible are understood; as the different duties it enjoins become known to you; you will find it necessary to examine yourself to see how you value these truths, and how you obey these commands. This self-examination, and meditation, and searching of the Scriptures, will furnish you constantly with subjects for prayer. If you are faithful in these duties, you will be able to obey the injunction of the Apostle—"Pray without ceasing."*

* 1 Thess. v. 17.

CHAPTER X.

CONTROL OF THE AFFECTIONS.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. iii. 1, 2.

MEN are always influenced by what they love. Ascertain what a man loves, and you may readily judge of his character, and tell how his efforts will be directed. The work before you is one that demands a constant watch over the affections and desires of your heart. The great difference between the people of the world and the children of God, consists in the direction of the affections. A thoroughly worldly man loves the world supremely; while the love of the devoted Christian is given supremely to God.

You are now called upon to "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." It will not be amiss to consider more

fully the importance of keeping your affections thus properly directed. Upon the direction of your affections will depend your whole course in life. If your first love to Christ and heavenly things continues increasing, your path will be that of the just which "is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." If, on the contrary, you begin to lose your first love, your course will be sadly inconstant, and your influence, as a Christian, be much diminished, if not entirely lost. It will become necessary to address to you admonitions similar to the solemn language sent to the church at Ephesus: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."* There is nothing that is more discouraging to the heart of the faithful Christian, than to see evidences that the love of the people of God is waxing cold. It is the sure forerunner of a host of evils. On the other hand, the evidence that they think more frequently of

* Rev. ii. 5.

things above, and love them more, fills his heart with joy. And it is sure to be followed by a rich harvest of good fruits.

Be very careful that you do not fasten your affections on things on the earth. In other words, be exceedingly watchful against the approaches of what is generally called worldliness. By worldliness, I mean a love of the world and the things of the world for themselves; a preferring of these things to the things of God. I do not mean that you are to encourage a spirit like that which sends the hermit to his desert, and the monk to his solitary cell. I do not advise you to look on the earth as a horrible wilderness, wrapped in gloom, and filled with loathsome reptiles and unclean beasts of prey; a wilderness, in which no fair and beautiful thing can find a place. Such is not the spirit which the Scriptures teach, and which the Gospel breathes. Christ bore no resemblance to a hermit; nor were Paul, and Peter, and John, imbued in any degree with the spirit of monkery. These are to be your examples. To shun worldliness, then, it is not necessary to bury yourself in some lone desert. To be heavenly-minded, it is not demanded

that you retreat from all contact with the world. Some of the most heavenly-minded men, which the world has ever seen, have been pre-eminently men of action, and have played very prominent parts in life's busy scenes. Some of those, who have loved most earnestly the things which are above, have been the most ready to discern and to enjoy that which is beautiful in the present world. They differed from the worldly-minded in these respects. They were in the world, but not of the world; they regarded themselves as pilgrims and strangers on earth, journeying to their home on high; they gazed on the beauty of earth, only to feel an increasing desire to behold the more bright and beautiful scenes of their promised home in heaven.

It is such a state of mind as this, that you should aim to secure. It cannot be attained without an effort. You will find in yourself a tendency to become attached to the things of the world for their own sake; to love them for themselves, and not as the gifts of a kind Father; to fasten your affections on them, so as to love God and heaven less. This is the great danger, and it is only by unceasing watch-

fulness, and earnest prayer, that you can escape it.

Let me call your attention to some of the means by which a worldly spirit is fostered; to some few of those things against which you will need to be constantly watchful.

1. *Love of worldly company.* It will be impossible for you to associate with any one habitually without feeling, in some degree, his influence. His habits will exert an influence on your deportment; his ways of thinking will modify your views; his ordinary spirit will affect your own spirit and temper. If his views, and feelings, and desires are all worldly, you will find yourself gradually adopting the same. And the higher he stands in your esteem, the more powerful his influence over you will be. It is this tendency that makes the company of the worldly so peculiarly dangerous to a young Christian. I have not reference now to the openly vicious. Of course, your sense of self-respect would hinder you from making such your associates. I mean merely those who are what you may call irreligious. They may be possessed of cultivated minds, and in this respect have a very decided

advantage over yourself. They may be refined in manners, of pleasing address, and eminently social. They may be worthy of very great respect for many estimable qualities. But, whatever charms their society may have, if they are indifferent to religion, and habitually neglectful of the most important religious duties, you will find it necessary to be very much on your guard. Otherwise, you will find your religious views and feelings sinking down to the low level of their own. Under such influence you will come, by natural and easy steps, to regard religion as less important than you formerly deemed it. It is exceedingly probable that the more charm their society has, the more powerful and injurious will be their influence on your religious character.

On this subject, you must appeal honestly to your own experience. You must ask yourself how you feel after spending some hours in such society. It may be that, after a social evening devoted to company of this kind, you have returned to your closet. There has been, it may be, nothing in the conversation, to which the most severe censor could bring a

positive objection. But there has been nothing to show, in any way, or to any degree, a sense of the importance of the great and precious truths of the Gospel. You have felt, that any direct or indirect reference to these truths would have checked the flow of their gay and sparkling conversation. Now test candidly the effect upon yourself. The lively emotions of the social hour have passed away, and you come to your place of prayer, to hold converse with God your Saviour. Do you feel less interest in prayer? Are you less conscious of the evil of sin, and less earnest in your desire for the blessings which Christ offers to you? If this be the effect, then, whatever such society may be to others, to you it is likely to prove a snare. You will see at once, that to cherish a love for it, must tend strongly to turn away your affections from "things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." It will, then, become necessary for you to choose between the love of worldly company, and the love of Christ. You must control and restrain the former, or cease to breathe the

prayer: "Lead us not into temptation."* To continue to seek such social enjoyment, is to put yourself directly in the way of temptation to the exercise of a worldly spirit. You would blame the man who should continue to indulge his appetite for some pleasant food, notwithstanding he had always found it injurious to his bodily health. Nor would you spare your reproof, were he to plead as an excuse, that in the case of many of his friends such an indulgence was entirely harmless. You would be prompt to reply, that he ought to be governed by the evil it works to himself, and not by its effects upon others. In precisely the same way, should you judge in regard to worldly company. You will then feel, that, however pleasant it may be, if it is not safe to indulge in it, you must deny yourself for the sake of your spiritual health. From the want of such self-denial, many young Christians are drawn into the vortex of worldliness, to their own sad injury, and to the injury of the cause of Christ.

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* Matt. vi. 13.

2. *Love of wealth.* The chief aim of the men of the present day, would seem to be to gather wealth. To be industrious, and prudent, and successful in business, is a sure passport to public respect. The great majority delight to honor the man who is known to be rapidly making money. It is not to be supposed, that you will be altogether uninfluenced by the prevailing tendency of the times. In whatever sphere of life you move, the love of money may steal into your heart. It is not the rich alone, who are in danger of becoming covetous. It is not merely the man of large business, that is in danger of becoming greedy of gain. The man, whose means of acquiring money are very limited indeed, may be quite as covetous as one who can reasonably hope to accumulate more rapidly. He who thinks himself doing well, when he can lay up his five, or ten, or fifty dollars each year, may be quite as eager to save that small sum, as the man who counts his increase by thousands. It is not the situation in which you may be placed, that will secure you from temptation to covetousness. You are, at all times, and in all places, ex-

posed to this temptation; and you should constantly bear in mind the admonition of the Saviour: "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."*

Nor must you indulge the expectation of avoiding this sin, by ceasing to be industrious, refusing to obey the dictates of prudence, or by indifference to success in business. Every Christian ought to be industrious and prudent, and to hope for success in his calling. But you must take care of the heart, that it does not become devoted to the getting of gain; that you do not come to regard this as the great object of life, and to make all other things bend to it. If you do not carefully guard your affections, you will find yourself, coming, it may be by slow and imperceptible degrees, to love money more than you love Christ. It is to this that the Apostle refers, when he calls covetousness idolatry. It is giving to money that place in your affections, which belongs to Christ alone. You

* Luke xii. 15.

are told to be "not slothful in business;" but your duty does not stop here; that to many men would be an easy task; but you are also to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."*

In order to determine whether this very common and very disastrous form of worldliness is stealing upon you, it will be necessary often to question yourself with extreme jealousy. Let me furnish you with a few hints, to guide your examination. Christ has stated the great law which is to govern you in all your dealings with your fellow men: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."† Ask yourself whether, in your efforts to get gain, you are tempted to forget this law. It prohibits all hard bargains; all attempts to get the better of another in traffic; every effort to obtain possession of another's property, without giving a fair equivalent; and all desire to take advantage of the ignorance or the necessities of another. If you are tempted, in any manner, to violate this law for your own advantage, you will see that you need to watch

* Rom. xii. 11. † Matt. vii. 12.

yourself very closely, lest your love of gain lead you farther and farther into sin. And if you are disposed, in order to increase your gains, to slight or omit any of your religious duties, you may be very sure that the love of money is gaining an undue influence over you. It is not necessary to dwell further on this subject. It is enough to remind you of the need of extreme caution, and to indicate, in general, the means of detecting in yourself the working of this form of worldliness.

3. *Love of irreligious books.* This is one of the prominent means of leading Christians, at the present day, to the indulgence of a worldly spirit. It is exceedingly desirable that you should read much; but you should be careful what you read, and how you read it. Let me explain what I mean by irreligious books. I allude to books which, from the nature of the subjects on which they treat, are capable of receiving a tone from the irreligious disposition of their authors; and which bear evidence to his indifference or opposition to the truths of the Gospel. There are purely scientific works, in which we do

not expect or desire to find any moral or theological sentiments. A mathematical, or mechanical work, may be a very good, and a very safe book, though there is no distinct recognition of religion or of morals upon its pages. It is very different, however, with a large class of books; that class which secures by far the largest number of readers; works of history, and of poetry, and of fiction. If such works, which prove so fascinating to a large circle of readers, are composed by one who is indifferent to the religion of Christ, or opposed to it, they are likely to do very much to encourage a worldly spirit. If they judge of men, and of life, by a false standard — a standard different from that which the Gospel of Christ holds up—those who read them will be likely to imbibe something of the same style of thinking. They will exert an influence, in some measure, like that which worldly company exercises.

In testing the effect of such reading on yourself, you should make inquiries similar to those which I suggested under the head of worldly company. It may be, that you read much, or that your reading is very limited.

It matters little what amount of time you devote to such reading. You can readily ascertain, by honest inquiry, its effect upon you. Does it help you to "set your affection on things above and not on things on the earth?" You may remember some book over which you have sat long, with undivided attention. But you closed the volume at length. Did the reading chill your spirit of devotion? Were you more indifferent to prayer, and more careless about securing the favor of God, and enjoying the presence of Christ? If so, then that book was exerting a bad influence upon you. It is sufficient, in itself, to prove, that you need to watch over and control your love for reading, lest it become a snare to you. In the case of too many, their love for improper books is a proof, and at the same time a means, of increasing their inveterate worldliness.

4. *Love of dress.* Do not be surprised that I call your attention to this subject; for the number of those, in whom a worldly spirit takes this form, is very great, not only among the young, but also among those of riper years. Neatness and propriety of dress may

naturally be expected of a Christian. One who is slovenly in his external appearance, will generally be slovenly in his religious habits. A well regulated mind and heart will, ordinarily, be found accompanied by a neat personal appearance. But there is a great difference between a proper regard to neatness and a love of display. You may be careful to be arrayed with neatness and propriety, without injury to your religious feelings. Properly regulated religious feelings demand such carefulness. But you cannot begin to consult for display, to dress for the sake of show, without impairing your religious character. Your own experience will, perhaps, teach you this.

It would not be proper to enter here into any particulars on the subject of dress, or to attempt to draw the line between a proper regard to personal appearance, and a love for dress. You can do this for yourself. Nor would it be advisable to detail all the evils that may ensue from the fostering of a passion for fine clothing. I appeal to the effect on religious character. If this is injured, you suffer indeed. When you begin

to dress in order to attract the attention of others, or to surpass them in show; when you find your attention to dress drawing your heart away from prayer, and other religious duties—then be sure that your love of dress is becoming an evil of no small importance, and that you are seeking the things that are on the earth rather than those that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

It would be easy to enlarge on the particular indications of a worldly spirit; to point out the evils resulting from the love of popularity, the love of excitement, and the love of pleasure; by all of which you are liable to be tempted. But it would occupy too much space in a work like this; and, moreover, you can yourself follow out the examination in the manner already indicated. If you find any of these things taking that place in your heart which belongs to Christ and heavenly things, you must look to Him, who is able to succour those who are tempted.

All of the things, to which I have drawn your attention, belong to that sin of worldliness against which the Scriptures so solemnly

warn you. It was not an imaginary danger, that the Apostle had in view, when he used that impressive language: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."* By these temptations, emanating from "the world," or from "the things of the earth," you are continually liable to be assailed.

It becomes a matter of serious moment to inquire how you may escape the danger to which you are exposed. You cannot safely place reliance on your own strength of mind, as a defence from the insidious approaches of the love of the world. You need higher aid. Your refuge is in humble prayer to Him who giveth strength to the weak, and aid to the tempted. You must send up your prayer to Him for an increase of faith. I have, throughout this work, urged upon you the necessity of a simple and hearty belief of the

* 1 John ii. 15, 16.

truths of the Bible. You need that same faith now, as a defence against worldliness. "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."* Believe what the Scriptures teach in regard to the "things which are above." Impress on your mind, by frequent meditation, a sense of their supreme excellence and worth. Never lose sight of their infinite value, and you will find your affections continually tending heavenward. A constant faith in Christ, now enthroned in glory, and beckoning you to mansions in the skies, will effectually secure you against the approaches of worldliness.

* 1 John v. 4.

CHAPTER XI.

DUTY OF A CHURCH MEMBER.

"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—1 Tim. iii. 15.

I SUPPOSE that you have now advanced so far as to have taken your place as a member of a church of Christ. You are now ready to inquire how you shall conduct yourself as a member of a church, so that you may please Christ. You will find, in the New Testament, all the information that you require. I need only give you some of the outlines of your duty, with some suggestions to show the importance of following the rules laid down in the Bible. Search until you learn all that the Bible can teach you. As I have before said, if you desire to render a hearty obedience, you will not be satisfied until you have learned

what is required of you, and have steadily set yourself to the doing of it.

I. DUTIES TO YOUR PASTOR.

The duty of furnishing him a support, I place first, not, however, because I think it the most important. Paul, in writing to the Church at Corinth, says: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."* Our Lord himself had previously laid down the general principle that "the laborer is worthy of his hire."† He brings it in to show the just claim that those who devote themselves to preaching the Gospel have to a supply of their wants. But, if this be true—if every pastor should have a support—who is to give it? You want to know whether you have any duty in the case. Turn to the words of the Apostle. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good

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* 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. † Luke x. 7.

things."* Now, has the church to which you belong a pastor who devotes himself to the work of the ministry? Then you have a duty to perform. It is your duty, as you are taught in the word, to communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. You are called to act a liberal part. Do not ask how little he can possibly live upon. That would not be to obey the command. Do not pursue a niggardly, stingy course; but communicate, freely, amply, to him that teacheth in all good things. Do thus to him for the sake of the Saviour whom you serve. It will be pleasing to Him, for He bids you do it. I do not, of course, say how much you ought to do. That you can and must decide. But whatever you give, let it be with the desire to please Christ, and to secure His smile. If what you give pleases Him; if you can hope that He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—you have then done enough. But otherwise, you have left undone a part of what you ought to have done.

Esteem your pastor. "And we beseech

* Gal. vi. 6.

you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."* Such is the instruction of the Gospel on this subject. You will see at once the tendency of this esteem to give effect to your pastor's ministrations. Every man has the desire of esteem; that is, all wish to be thought well of by those about them. When any one has a consciousness that he possesses the esteem of others, he is happier, and, as he is happier, he will labor with more spirit and success. Let your pastor see that you esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake, and you will do much to promote the peace and prosperity of the church. But, independently of this, you will be doing your duty. That will be pleasing to God, which, as I have said before, is your highest concern.

Pray for your pastor. I need only allude to this duty. If you esteem him highly, you will be likely to remember him in your prayers. How desirable the prayers of his

* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

brethren were to Paul, you may judge from the frequency with which he asks them to pray for him.* If Paul thus prized the prayers of his brethren, do not forget to pray for your pastor. Pray that his labors may be made the means of blessing to the church, and to those yet without. In the answer to such prayers, you will yourself be blessed.

II. DUTIES TO YOUR BRETHREN.

Live in love. When Christ was about to leave his disciples, He addressed to them these heart-melting words: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."† And twice afterwards, on that memorable evening, He repeats the command, as though anxious to press it most deeply on their attention. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." "These things I command you, that ye love one another."‡ All the passages that might

* Rom. xv. 30; Eph. vi. 18, 19; 1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1.

† John xiii. 34, 35. ‡ John xv. 12, 17.

be gathered from the writings of the Apostles, could add no force to this reiterated injunction of Christ. He gives it as a command, and makes the keeping of it a test of friendship to Himself. After repeating His command once, and before giving utterance to it again, He says: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you."*

The command, then, comes to you with very great authority; and your business now is to set yourself seriously and prayerfully to carry it out, both in its letter, and in its spirit. You must call up and examine your feelings toward your brethren; and if you find that other than feelings of love have crept into your heart, remember Christ's words: "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." You may say, that one or another has not treated you with as much respect or consideration as he ought; or he has done something calculated to injure you in some way. That may all be true. But it does not alter the command of Christ. "As I have loved you," He says. How has

* John xv. 13.

He loved you? Were you always well-disposed towards Him? Have you never failed in respect towards Him? Ah, how much more cause has your Saviour to complain of your treatment towards Him, than you have to find fault with the manner of any of your brethren towards you! Yet Christ has loved you. And though you now often show yourself very neglectful of Him, yet He loves you still. As He has loved, and does love you,—so love your brethren. He puts it in this light, doubtless with a design that you should humbly look at yourself, and your own course toward Him. The effort to call up the manner in which Christ has loved you, is well calculated to awaken feelings of humble gratitude. And while feelings of humble gratitude to Him, who has pardoned freely your offences, and loves you notwithstanding all, exist in your mind, you cannot be unforgiving to your brethren, nor be unwilling to love them, even though they may not have acted towards you as they ought to have done. But I need say no more on this subject. The love of Christ to you is fully sufficient to banish from your heart every feeling except

that of love. Let love always rule. Whenever you are tempted to admit any other feeling, remember the words of Christ: "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

If this feeling of love is at all times burning within your heart, you will naturally be prompted to pray for your brethren; to exhort them; to bear their burdens; to assemble with them; to forgive all offences.

On two points let me dwell a little more fully. The Apostle exhorts the Hebrews to meet together, and condemns those who neglect this duty. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."* Sincere love among all the members of the Church, will tend to draw them together. If you have such love, you will be present at their seasons of public worship, at their times of social prayer, and when they meet to attend to the business which devolves on them as a Church of Christ. In each and all of these, you have an interest in common with your brethren. It is only as the interest

* Heb. x. 25.

of all is drawn out in these various ways, that the good of the whole is most fully promoted. Whatever is of sufficient interest to the Church to induce them to come together, ought to be of sufficient interest to you to induce you to meet with them. Do not select the season of public worship, and neglect the other meetings. Do not deem any of them unimportant; or your absence from your brethren at any of them as of no consequence. It is a matter of importance to yourself at least; for you want to cherish an enduring love for your brethren. If you neglect to meet with them, you will become indifferent to their interests. You want also to grow in grace, which, as I have said, is to form a habit of faithfully and cheerfully doing your duty, at all times, and in all particulars. If you do not form this habit, you will be a constant sufferer. If you neglect one duty, temptation to neglect another will be more likely to overcome you. But a punctual observance of all meetings of the Church, is also important from its influence on others. By your steadfast and regular attendance on these meetings, you will be giving to others

an example, that will not be without its effect. For your own advantage, then, and for the good of others; for the sake of preserving and increasing the mutual love of the whole of the members of the Church; be careful in obeying the letter and the spirit of the injunction cited above. Whenever and wherever your brethren meet, meet with them.

On the treatment of offences, I would refer you to the language of Christ. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."* The design of this injunction, is to secure peace in the Churches of Christ. If it were carried out, there would be little discord or strife in them. Go first to thy

* Matt. xviii. 15—17.

brother who has offended thee, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. In many cases, you will find this sufficient to secure a return of kindly and Christian feeling. If not, take one or two with thee. This may avail. If so, happy will it be. If not, then tell it to the Church. Perchance this last effort may be successful, and you will of course rejoice in it. If he, however, will not hear them, then admonition and effort have been tried to the utmost. He must be put out, and peace will reign within. Think often on this rule of Christ and its effects, and follow the course He enjoins.

There is one more injunction, to which I wish to call your attention. I presume that most of those, with whom I converse by means of these pages, are young. If you belong to that class, you will not pass by this without due reflection. It is one of those passages in which your duty is laid down; and I assume that you wish to know all that the Scriptures require of you. You have frequently read the passage; but perhaps you have not made a personal application of it to yourself. "Likewise, ye younger, submit

yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."* The Apostle has in mind the ordinary characteristics of youth. They are active, energetic, self-confident, impatient of all kinds of restraint. He would have these tendencies of youth kept under due control, lest they mar the peace of the Churches. There is a certain bearing and deportment becoming the young in their intercourse with their elder brethren. "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder." Do not forget this. It points out the part that you are to perform. Do you shrink from it? Then strive to obey the latter part of the injunction, "Be clothed with humility." Thus what is hard to you now, will become easy.

After giving this direction especially to the young, the Apostle makes it general: "Yea, all of you be subject one to another." That is, all should be willing to take the lowest place; as the Apostle Paul expresses it: "In

* 1 Peter v. 4.

honor preferring one another."* But do not allow yourself to feel as though the extension of the injunction to all, freed you from the necessity of obedience. Even though your elders may be sadly wanting in the spirit enjoined, do not you forsake the line of duty marked out for you. Obey the command in the spirit and in the letter. Let love and humility always possess your heart, and you will find it easy and pleasant to discharge this and every other duty devolving on you as a member of a Church of Christ.

* Rom. xii. 10.

CHAPTER XII.

DUTY TO THE WORLD.

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men."—GAL. vi. 10.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."—MARK xvi. 15.

IN the course of these chapters, the example and instructions of Christ have been frequently referred to. In so far as you can do so, it is your duty to follow His example. In looking at the history of His life, which the Evangelists have written, you see that the doing of good was his daily occupation. "Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."* There can be no more glorious course held out to you, than the imitation of Christ. If you feel a just sense of the evil of sin, and have begun to be attracted by the beauty of holiness, you will

* 2 Peter ii. 21.

always look with pleasure on the laborious, unselfish, spotless life of Christ. Could you only live as He lived; in the world, but not of the world; you feel that it would be an unspeakably blessed life. But remember, that you are to study His example, and to imitate it, as far as may be possible to you.

If you look at His manner of doing good to men, you will see that there was no devotion to one kind of well doing to the neglect of others. He was no less ready to give bread to the hungering multitude, than to proclaim the truths which He came to teach. Because the knowledge of the Gospel was so important, He did not confine Himself to preaching it, and forget the pressing wants of the poor, the sick, the sorrowing. Nor, because the temporal needs of men were so numerous, did He lose sight of the necessity of the Gospel to do away with the evils of their hearts. There are now two kinds of benevolence in the world. One of these would aim only to relieve the temporal; the other, only the spiritual wants of men. One gives religious teaching, but has no open hand to supply bread to the starving. The

other is ready to give bread to the hungry, and medicine to the sick; but has no heart to speak of those religious truths, which are healing and strength to the soul. It is not, however, my design to pursue this subject, and show fully the character of each class. I wish to lead you to abhor both the hypocrisy of those who are ready to give religious counsel, but have no hand to aid the temporal necessities of their fellow-men; and the ungodliness of those who are ready to supply bodily wants, but minister not to the well-being of the soul. The Scriptures condemn equally both these classes. I wish you to see that Christian benevolence must be a benevolence like that of Christ; a care for both body and soul. He had compassion both on those who suffered temporal evils, and on those who were suffering evils that sprung from their own unholy hearts. He wept at the grave of Lazarus in sympathy with human sorrow; He wept over Jerusalem in pity for human guilt. He always looked upon guilt as the cause of sorrow and suffering; and sorrow and suffering as the effect of human guilt. By His religious teaching, He laid the axe at

the root of the evil. By His sympathy for the sorrowing, and His aid to the suffering, He lopped off its branches. His object was to remove evil, both root and branch.

Do you ask, then, what duty you owe to the world? Go ye and do likewise. Be ready, with open hand, to bless the poor and needy. Be ready to sympathize with those who suffer or sorrow. Be ready to teach the truths you have learned in the spirit of Christ. The events of each day may, perchance, bring you in contact with those, who need just what you are able to give. The poor want bread and clothing; the sick want medicine and care; the suffering want sympathy; the sorrowing and bereaved want consolation; the erring need reproof, or counsel, or advice; the penitent need to be told of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. In some or all of these ways, you may, perhaps, daily find or make an opportunity to do good. Do not forget, then, the command, "As you have opportunity, therefore, do good to all men."

Let me now turn your attention more particularly to the obligations that rest upon you, to assist in carrying out the com-

mission, which Christ gave to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Two things demand your attention—the import of the command, and the means by which it may be fulfilled.

Its import is, that the Gospel is to be preached to every creature under the whole heaven; and that those, who have already heard it, are to see that it is carried to all. Are you aware how little comparatively has been done towards the fulfilment of that command; and how many have never yet heard of Christ and Him Crucified? If you have not yet made these things familiar to your mind, suppose you examine some recent work on Geography, and see how many millions of human beings there are at present in the world, and how large a proportion of them are still unacquainted with the Gospel. According to one estimate, now beside me, there are nine hundred and thirty-eight millions of inhabitants in the world. Of these, two hundred and fifty-three millions are reckoned as Christians; four millions as Jews; one hundred and twenty-three millions as Mo-

hammedans; and five hundred and sixty-one millions as Pagans. The two hundred and fifty-three millions of Christians comprise all those nations in which the Christian religion is the prominent one. Subtracting that number from the whole population of the earth, there are then six hundred and eighty-five millions, who make no claim at all to the name of Christian, or to the blessings of Christianity. Look at this statement, and ponder it well. It may be fairly inferred, that the greater part of these have never heard of salvation by faith in Christ. By some, the number of these is estimated at six hundred millions. The command of Christ means that to these six hundred millions the Gospel should be preached; and it is to be preached by Christians. Nay, more than this, it means that to all, who have heard the Gospel, but have not yet exercised faith in Christ, its solemn warnings and its gracious invitations should still be uttered, till they turn from their evil ways, or pass beyond the reach of human effort. The world includes all, wherever they live, who have not exercised that repentance toward God, and that faith in Christ, of which

I have spoken in previous chapters. These are they, "that are without."* These constitute "the whole world that lieth in wickedness."† They may be your nearest relatives and friends, or they may be among those who live in the darkest heathen land. To these you owe a duty. To each, and all of these, do good as you have opportunity.

By what means shall you aim to have the Gospel preached everywhere, and everywhere embraced?

First, by your personal character and influences. "Ye," says Christ, "are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."‡ The tendency of a consistent Christian life, is to lead those who behold it to think of God, and to glorify Him. Do not, then, put out the light of the world, and leave it in darkness; but be very careful that your light shines brightly. That is, give to the world the benefit of your example. See that you follow Christ; and then the world may safely

* 1 Thess. iv. 12. † 1 John v. 19. ‡ Matt. v. 14, 16.

follow you. Thus even when your lips speak not, your life will preach. Christ your Saviour expects this of you, that the world may be benefited, and your Father in heaven glorified.

But you can, by personal effort, do something to bring others "to lay hold upon the hope set before us"* in the Gospel. There is, much preaching of the Gospel needed, even in this land, before it can come to be generally understood and received. Its truths must be again and again presented, in a plain and simple manner, to men. You may do this by personal conversation. There are very few who are unwilling to listen to Christian advice and exhortation, when given in a kind and conciliatory manner. Of course, in this, as in all things, judgment must be exercised, as to the time and manner of address. You will judge of this, in a good measure, from the character of the person whom you approach, and from the circumstances of the case. But if you are watchful and prudent, you will find,

* Heb. vi. 18.

or make many opportunities for doing good in this manner.

You can also do very much by the circulation of religious books and tracts. This is a means that has often been employed with very cheering results. You take up some book or tract, and, on reading it, you may find something that you think would be profitable to some one of your acquaintances. Lend or give the work to him, or induce him to purchase and read it for himself. For instance, in perusing these pages you may find some truth adapted to the case of some relative or friend. By bringing the truth before his mind, you may do him a very great, perhaps, the greatest possible kindness. Mark that passage, then, and loan or give him the book. When you have once begun to use religious books as a means of doing good, you will find so many proofs of the usefulness of this instrumentality, that you will not easily be induced to abandon it. You may thus be instrumental in putting the means of religious admonition and instruction within the reach of very many, who, perhaps, would not otherwise possess them. It will be a pleasing thing, on your

dying bed, to be able to look back over the pathway of life, and reflect that you have been scattering good seed along its whole length. Do not by present neglect, deprive yourself of the pleasure of thus looking back from the end of life.

You may benefit those who are far off from you, by joining your efforts with those of your brethren, who are using means to cause the Gospel to be preached abroad. The plan is a very simple one. There are some who are willing to go and preach the Gospel. There are others who remain behind, and support those that have gone. They give them their sympathy, their advice, their contributions, and their prayers. The missionary, and those at home, who contribute to the missionary cause, are all aiming at one object. They join together to accomplish it. The part that each performs is necessary. It is necessary that some go to preach; it is necessary that he who goes be supported; and it is necessary that those, who do not go, contribute for the support of those who do. Paul, when he was preaching as a missionary in Greece and Rome, was aided by the contributions of his brethren

who remained in their own homes. See how he refers to the aid that was sent to him by the Philippians. "Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound. I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."* you would, perhaps, consider it an honor, if you had been one of those Philippians. It was a lasting honor to those brethren; and they will not lose their reward at the last day. But the honor was in supporting, not Paul the man, but Paul the Apostle, or Missionary of Jesus Christ. It is because Paul was preaching Christ and Him crucified, and because they contributed to his needs while thus employed, that the Philippians will be so honorably re-

* Phil. iv. 15–18.

warded at last. Now you can contribute, not to the support of Paul, but to the support of one who is preaching just the same truths that Paul preached. If you do contribute to the support of such an one, and because he is preaching Christ, you are doing an honorable work; and it will be seen to be such when that same Christ comes in the clouds of heaven.

In all these ways that I have mentioned, begin at once to manifest your love for Christ and for your fellow men. I have already referred to the duty of prayer for all men. But prayer and effort must be joined together. It was so that Christ did. And so did Paul, and the other Apostles of our Lord. They, during their day and generation, thus carried on the work of God in the world. You are to serve God, in like manner, in your day. Be not a sluggard in the work. And never become "weary in well doing, for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not."*

* Gal. vi. 9.

CHAPTER XIII.

USES OF AFFLICTION.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Heb. xii. 11.

"And not only so but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."—Rom. v. 3–5.

THUS far my main object has been to point you to the active duties which you are to perform. These constitute a large portion of the Christian life. Yet you must expect sometimes to suffer as well as to act. You have to learn submission to God both in suffering and in action. Before closing this work, therefore, let me turn your attention to the afflictions which you may be called upon to endure, and point to the uses you should make of such dis-

pensations of God's providence. Your views of affliction must be formed from the Scriptures, and not from the opinions commonly held by the men of this world. Generally, in their estimation, afflictions are evil, and only evil. If they refer them at all to God as their source, they never regard them as indications of His goodness and love. Hence their impatience under their trials and sufferings. In many cases, afflictions excite in their hearts a more determined opposition to God. You will remember the language of Jehovah to the Jews: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more."* Such language would often be very applicable to the ungodly. You, however, must look upon afflictions with very different feelings. You will draw your views of them from the Scriptures.

First, notice the general design of all the dealings of God with His people, whether afflictive or otherwise. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose."† The plain import of

* Isa. l. 5. † Rom. viii. 28.

this passage is, that God designs to secure the highest good of each of his children; and that He will make every thing tend to that result. He directs every thing concerning you. There is no one thing, that affects you pleasantly or unpleasantly, which is not under His control. Let this truth be firmly fastened in your mind. All your afflictions, then, of whatever kind they may be, whether affecting your mind, your body, or your estate, are from God, and are designed by Him to promote your good.

As He knows best what will secure your interests, He will choose accordingly. He sends afflictions only when your good demands them. "For the Lord will not cast off forever. But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."* "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and

* Lam. iii. 31—33.

live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit; that we might be partakers of His holiness."* These passages abundantly prove that afflictions are only sent when needed. When they come upon you, then, they should teach you humility. Instead of proudly murmuring, as though you had been dealt with harshly, begin to examine yourself, in order to see what in your spirit and temper, in your life and conversation, needs to be corrected; to see in what you come short of that holiness, of which God designs you to be a partaker. Instead of complaining, you will then find reason to be thankful, that His strokes are so few and so light. You will feel that they have not been proportioned to your sins. You will find mercy and goodness in them, and will rejoice in the discovery.

One great reason why the men of this world err in their opinion of afflictions, is because they confine their views to the present. The good which they seek, belongs to this world. Present ease, present enjoyment,

* Heb. xii. 9, 10.

present possessions, are the main objects of their desire. But the Scriptures call you to "seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; to set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth."* You are not to be satisfied with any good that is not enduring. You are a pilgrim and stranger on earth. And whatever you may gather of earthly good, you can carry nothing with you. The only permanent blessing—the only good you can bear from this world into that to which you go—is a heart subdued to the will of God; a heart prepared to join in the holy services of saints and angels in heaven. When you come to the hour of death, your peace will depend, not on what you possess, but on what you are. You may be poor as Lazarus, and yet be wafted at once by angel-attendants to Abraham's bosom. Or you may have at command all the treasures of the earth; yet if you have not "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord,"† you will be unspeakably poor forever. Do

* Col. iii. 1, 2. † Heb. xii. 14.

you believe this? I know you do. But have you dwelt upon it so that it has become one of those settled truths, which continually influence you? You need to meditate often and long upon it, until you habitually feel that holiness is that one thing, which you should, above all others, labor to secure.

Now the afflictions, which God sends upon you, are designed to make you a partaker of His holiness, and of all the blessings which flow from its possession. Can you draw any comparison between the afflictions that you may have to suffer, and the blessings they are designed to secure to you? Can you, for a moment, think any pain, that lasts but for a short season, a very heavy evil, when it works for you a joy that shall never end? The Apostle Paul has left us his opinion of the sufferings which the people of God endure. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."* "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding

* Rom. viii. 18.

and eternal weight of glory."* Surely, if such be the results of affliction, if you believe—and you must believe—that they are designed to work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, you will not be disposed to murmur at them, however severe they may be during their continuance. You will, at least, be patient under them; and, perchance, you will feel prepared to join with the Apostle, and glory in tribulations also.

But it is not my design merely to urge you to be patient in your trials. I should not do justice to the views which the Scriptures present to us, were I to be satisfied with this. Nor do I mean to assert that afflictions are to be desired in themselves. You are not to choose to suffer; to prefer a life of suffering to a life of ease; in order that you may show how bravely you can endure trouble and sorrow. But when God lays upon you His afflicting hand, you are not to sink in despondency, or rise in rebellion against Him. You may say with the Saviour: "O my Father!

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" but you must also be ready to exclaim: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."* At times, when some heavy affliction first presses upon you, you may find it difficult to bow without murmuring to the will of God. But you must check every rising murmur; and must, moreover, try to reap positive benefit from the trial. It was thus that the Psalmist did. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes."† Here was good fruit from affliction. The Psalmist was drawn nearer to God by this means. You may not be able to tell at what time, and in what manner, afflictions may come. Leave that in the hand of God. Be it your care to be ready to derive spiritual good from them. The proper use of them, is to draw you back from your wanderings, to detach you from earth and earthly dependence, and make you lay hold on Christ as all your trust. You have already learned to look to Him as the

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*Matt. xxvi. 39. †Ps. cxix. 67, 71.

source of all your salvation. You must also learn that He is the sufficient source of happiness to you. You probably remember the devout exclamation of God's ancient servant: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."* It is not every Christian, I fear, that is prepared to utter these words with a full understanding of their meaning. The work of God is far advanced in that soul, which is thoroughly convinced of the sufficiency of God for its happiness. Do you feel fully satisfied that the presence and the love of God could make you happy, though every other good were removed; and that without this you could not be happy, though you possessed every thing else that men consider desirable? Is your heart attracted so powerfully towards Christ, that you can say with the Apostle Paul: "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better?"† It is, doubtless, true that you

* Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. † Phil. i. 23.

know something of the preciousness of Christ as the source of salvation. Yet it may be necessary that you should learn, in the school of affliction, all His preciousness, and the full value of His love.

The plan which the Saviour adopts, in the impartation of spiritual blessings, is first to awaken a strong desire for them, and then to satisfy that desire. He designs to make known to you all the fullness of His love, and to fill your soul with the joy which that love alone can confer. If, by means of afflictions, He has drawn your attention to Himself, and caused you to long for His presence as your chief good; then He will be ready to manifest Himself to you in the fullness of His mercy and grace. Such has been the experience of His people in all ages. Seasons of affliction have drawn their affections from earth; and have made Christ and heaven—the Eternal and the unseen—objects of longing desire. And when these longing desires have been awakened in their hearts, they have had such gracious indications of the presence and the love of Christ, as they never knew before: such as to make them

literally "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."* I trust that you may thus find all your afflictions the means of bringing you nearer to Christ, and of bringing Christ nearer to you. If you so use afflictions, the sweet lines written by Pearce, that devoted servant of God, during his last illness, will express your experience also:

In the floods of tribulation,
While the billows o'er me roll,
Jesus whispers consolation,
And supports my fainting soul:
Sweet affliction!
That brings Jesus to my soul.

Here, in darkest dispensations,
Doth my faithful Lord appear;
With His richest consolations,
To reanimate and cheer:
Sweet affliction!
Thus to bring my Saviour near.

In the sacred page recorded,
Thus His word securely stands:
"Fear not, I'm in trouble near thee;
Nought shall pluck thee from my hands."
Sweet affliction!
Every word my love demands.

* Peter i. 8.

All I meet I find assists me
In my path to heavenly joy,—
Where, though trials now attend me,
Trials never more annoy:
Sweet affliction!
Thus to end in ceaseless joy.

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"Pastors and Deacons should both study this treatise."

From the Rev. J. Newton Brown, Editor of the "Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge."

"Several years ago, I was led to examine the subject of the Deaconship with special care, and regretted that there was nothing in the shape of a treatise upon it at all satisfactory. I then embodied my inquiries in the form of a sermon, and delivered it on two occasions, by request, at the ordination of Deacons. The sermon was so much approved as to be solicited for the press; but I never published it. I mention the fact to show you the preparation of my mind for examining with care the work of Dr. Howell; and I rejoice to say that I found the subject treated by him so perfectly to my satisfaction, that I shall never be tempted again to give my discourse to the press. I fervently bless the Head of the Church for directing Dr. Howell's attention to the subject. I thank him, and I thank the American Baptist Publication Society, for a work on the office of Deacons, which I trust is destined to form an era in our churches, of clear, definite, settled, scriptural views and practice. How really astonishing it is to a reflecting mind, that while so many hundreds of volumes have been written on the Pastoral office, and with such excellent effect, we have had absolutely nothing before, worthy to be called a treatise on the office of Deacon—though the latter is of equally Divine Institution and Authority—and scarcely inferior in importance, all things considered, to the well-being and efficiency of a church of Christ. Such a work is truly an augury of better times."

REMEMBER!

BY JOHN BUNYAN.

1. Remember that God sees thee, and has his eyes open upon thee, even then when sin and temptation is lying at thee to give it some entertainment.

2. Remember that God's wrath burns against sin, and that he will surely be revenged on it, and on all that give it entertainment. This made Job afraid to countenance it. Job xxxi. 23.

3. Remember the mischiefs that sin has done to those that have embraced it, and what distress it has brought upon others. This made the whole congregation of Israel tremble, to think that any of their brethren should give countenance to it. Joshua xxii. 16—18.

4. Remember what Christ hath suffered by it, that he might deliver us from the power of it. This made Paul so heartily to depart from it, and wish all Christians to do so, as well as he. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

5. Remember that those that are now in hell-fire, went thither because they loved iniquity, and would not depart from it. Ps. ix. 17; xi. 6; Mark ix. 43–48.

6. Remember that a profession is not worth a pin, if they that make it do not depart from iniquity. Jam. ii. 16, 17; 2 Tim. ii. 19.

7. Remember that thy death-bed will be very uneasy to thee, if thy conscience at that day shall be clogged with the guilt of thy iniquity. Hosea vii. 13, 14.

8. Remember that at the Judgment day, Christ will say to those, "Depart from me," that have not here departed from their sin and iniquity. Luke xiii. 27; Matt. xxv. 41.

9. Remember well, and think much upon what a blessed reward the Son of God will give unto them at that day, that have joined to their profession of faith in him, a holy and blessed conversation. Matt. xxv. 21.

PUBLISHED BY THE

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY.

GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING.—1 Tim. iv. 13.

PRESENTED

TO

Divinity School Harvard University

BY THE

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,

No. 118 Arch Street, Philadelphia.

1852.

BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US.—1 Thess. v. 25.